

Teleconference/Virtual

AGENDA

Board of Wildlife Resources
7870 Villa Park Drive
Henrico, Virginia 23228

May 27, 2021
9:00 am

Call to Order and Welcome –

Reading of the proceeding under Item 4-0.01.

This meeting is proceeding under Item 4-0.01; subsection G of the Appropriation Act and sections 2.2-3708.2 of the Code of Virginia. It is being held by electronic communication, as the COVID-19 virus has made a physical meeting of the Board impracticable. This emergency imposed by COVID-19 is observed by Executive Orders issued by the Governor of Virginia. The Board's actions today shall be solely limited to those matters included on the agenda. All of these proposed actions are statutorily required or necessary to continue operations and discharge lawful purposes, duties, and responsibilities of the Board.

1. Recognition of Employees and Others
2. Approval of the March 18, 2021 Board Meeting Minutes **Final Action**
3. Public Comments – Non Agenda Items
4. Committee Meeting Reports:

Wildlife and Boat Committee:

- Final Action on Proposal for 2021-2022 Wildlife Regulations **Final Action**
- CWD Update **Action**
- Prizes of Value for Predator Hunting Contests **Action**

➤ **Finance, Audit, & Compliance Committee:**

- FY22 Operating Budget: Operations and Capital

Final Action

Law Enforcement Committee:

- Law Internship Update

Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee:

- Wildlife Viewing Plan

Final Action

Nominations Committee Report:

- Nominations Committee Report

Final Action

5. Director's Report
6. Chairman's Report
7. Additional Business/Comments
8. Next Meeting Date: Thursday, August 19, 2021
9. Closed Session
10. Adjournment

Teleconference/Video Board Meeting

DRAFT Board Minutes

Board of Wildlife Resources
7870 Villa Park Drive
Henrico, VA 23228

March 18, 2021
9:00 am

Present: Mr. John Daniel, II, **Chair**, Mr. Brian Vincent, **Vice Chair**; **Board Members:** Mr. Leon Boyd, Ms. Karen Terwilliger, Dr. Mamie Parker, Mr. Frank Adams, Mr. Rovel Brown, Ms. Tammy Jo Grimes, Mr. Tom Sadler; **Absent:** Ms. Catherine Claiborne and Mr. G. K. Washington; **Executive Director:** Mr. Ryan Brown; **Director's Working Group:** Mr. Gary Martel, Mr. Tom Guess, Dr. Gray Anderson, Dr. Mike Bednarski, Mr. George Braxton, Mr. Darin Moore, Mr. Lee Walker, Colonel John Cobb, Ms. Paige Pearson, Ms. Rebecca Lane.

Kelci Block, Assistant Attorney General attended the Board meeting by Teleconference.

The Chair opened the meeting at 9:00 am. The Chair welcomed everyone attending the virtual meeting and thanked everyone for being able to attend by teleconference; The Chair noted for the record that a quorum was present.

The Chair, Mr. John Daniel announced that this meeting is proceeding under Item 4-0.01, Subsection G of the Appropriation Act and section 2.2-3708.2 of the code of Virginia. It is being held by electronic communication, as the COVID-19 virus has made a physical meeting of the Board impracticable. This emergency imposed by COVID-19 is observed by Executive Orders issued by the Governor of Virginia. The Board's actions today shall be solely limited to those matters included on the agenda. All of these proposed actions are statutorily required or necessary to continue operations and discharge lawful purposes, duties, and responsibilities of the Board.

The Chair introduced and welcomed two new Board members, Ms. Tammy Jo Grimes, and Mr. Rovel Brown and welcomed back to the Board for another term, Mr. Leon Boyd and Mr. Tom Sadler. The Executive Director Ryan Brown welcomed the new Board members and welcomed back Mr. Boyd and Mr. Sadler.

The Chair called for a roll call vote. The Board Secretary took a roll call vote for Attendance: Ayes: Daniel, Vincent, Terwilliger, Adams, Boyd, Parker, Sadler, Brown and Grimes

Recognitions of Employees and Others: The Chair called on Director Ryan Brown for Recognitions of Employees.

The Director called Ms. Rebecca Gwynn to the podium to be recognized. The Director presented Ms. Gwynn with the Robert McDowell Award for Conservation Management Excellence that is awarded by the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to honor career professionals who have made significant contributions to advance fish and wildlife conservation in the Northeastern United States and eastern Canadian Provinces.

The Director called on Dr. Gray Anderson for the recognition of Mr. Joe Ferdinandsen. Mr. Eric Fagerholm from the Merrimac Farms Virginia Master Naturalists Chapter presented Mr. Ferdinandsen with the Virginia Master Naturalists Award as State Chapter President of the Year.

The Director called on Colonel John Cobb for recognition of Major Scott Naff's retirement. Colonel Cobb read a resolution for Major Naff's service to the Department. Major Naff who attended virtually thanked the Department.

The Chair called for a motion. Mr. Leon Boyd made a motion, Mr. Chair; I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources approve the resolution for Major Scott Naff. It was seconded by Mr. Vincent and Dr. Parker. The Chair called on the Board Secretary for a roll call vote: Ayes: Daniel, Vincent, Terwilliger, Adams, Boyd, Grimes, Parker, Brown, and Sadler

The Chair and the Director thanked the presenters and congratulated the recipients for their recognitions and outstanding work performance.

Approval of the January 21, 2021 Board Meeting Minutes:

The minutes of the January 21, 2021 minutes have been distributed and posted to the website for review. The Chair called for a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Terwilliger made a motion to approve the January 21, 2021 Board minutes as submitted. It was seconded by Mr. Vincent.

The Board Secretary took a roll call vote. Ayes: Daniel, Vincent, Terwilliger, Adams, Boyd, Grimes, Brown, Parker, and Sadler

Public Comments – Non-Agenda Items:

The Chair called for Public Comments – Non Agenda Items:

- Mr. Judge Charlton spoke regarding Dog Hunting
- Mr. Preston Sullivan spoke regarding Deer Hound Hunting
- Mr. Jeff Sili spoke regarding Deer Hound Hunting
- Mr. John Lynch spoke regarding Deer Hound Hunting
- Mr. Jim Medeiros spoke regarding Deer Hound Hunting
- Mr. Dennis Davis spoke regarding Deer Hound Hunting
- Mr. Eric Gregory spoke regarding Deer Hound Hunting
- Mr. Curt Lytle spoke regarding Deer Hound Hunting
- Sheriff Brad Nunnally spoke regarding Deer Hound Hunting

The Chair thanked all the speakers for their comments.

Committee Reports:

Law Enforcement Committee:

The Chair called on Mr. Brian Vincent for an update on the virtual March 17, 2021 Law Enforcement Committee meeting.

Mr. Vincent gave an update on the March 17, 2021 virtual Law Enforcement Committee meeting.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Mr. Vincent for his update.

The Chair called for Break at 10:30 am

The Chair reconvened the meeting at 10:40 am

Wildlife and Boat Committee:

The Chair called on Mr. Leon Boyd for an update on the March 16, 2021 Wildlife and Boat Committee meeting.

Mr. Boyd gave an update on the March 16, 2021 virtual Wildlife and Boat Committee meeting.

Mr. Boyd called on Ms. Becky Gwynn for the Final Adoption of Proposed Regulation to Permit the Incidental Take of Migratory Birds.

Ms. Gwynn presented the Proposed Regulation to Permit the Incidental Take of Migratory Birds.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Ms. Gwynn for her presentation.

Speakers for Incidental Take of Migratory Birds:

- Ms. Stephanie Taillon spoke regarding Incidental Take of Migratory Birds
- Ms. Andrea Wortzel spoke regarding Incidental Take of Migratory Birds
- Ms. Nikki Rovner spoke regarding Incidental Take of Migratory Birds
- Ms. Deborah Murray spoke regarding Incidental Take of Migratory Birds
- Mr. Joel Merriman spoke regarding Incidental Take of Migratory Birds
- Ms. Terry Cuthriell spoke regarding Incidental Take of Migratory Birds
- Ms. Connie Erickson spoke regarding Incidental Take of Migratory Birds
- Mr. Josh Saks, Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources spoke regarding Incidental Take of Migratory Birds

The Chair called for a motion. Ms. Terwilliger made a motion. Mr. Chair, I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources adopt the amendments made to the Proposed Incidental Take of Migratory Birds regulation, following public comment as presented by staff. It was seconded by Mr.

Vincent. The Chair called for a roll call vote: Ayes: Daniel, Terwilliger, Adams, Vincent, Boyd, Grimes, Parker, Brown, and Sadler

The Chair called for a second motion. Ms. Terwilliger made a motion, Mr. Chair; I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources adopt the amended Proposed Incidental Take of Migratory Birds Regulation as presented by staff with an effective date of July 1, 2021. It was seconded by Mr. Vincent. The Chair called for a roll call vote: Ayes: Daniel, Terwilliger, Adams, Vincent, Boyd, Grimes, Parker, Brown, and Sadler.

Mr. Boyd called on Dr. Gary Costanzo to present the 2021-2022 Final Proposed Migratory Game Bird Harvest Regulations.

Dr. Costanzo presented the 2021-2022 Proposed Migratory Game Bird Harvest Regulations.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Dr. Costanzo for his presentation.

The Chair called for a motion. Mr. Boyd made a motion, Mr. Chair, I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources adopt the 2021-2022 Migratory Game Bird seasons and bag limits. It was seconded by Mr. Adams. The Chair called for a roll call vote. Ayes: Daniel, Vincent, Terwilliger, Adams, Boyd, Grimes, Parker, Brown, Sadler

Mr. Boyd called on Dr. Gray Anderson for a presentation.

Dr. Anderson presented the 2021-2022 Wildlife Regulation Recommendations.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Dr. Anderson.

After each staff recommendation, the Chair called for a motion and vote on each species or regulatory topics.

Virtual Speakers on Elk:

- Stephanie Taillon spoke regarding Elk

Elk: 4VAC15-20-65; 4VAC15-20-250; 4VAC15-90-500; 4VAC15-90-510; 4VAC15-90-520; 4VAC15-90-530; 4VAC15-90-540; 4VAC15-90-550; 4VAC15-270-10

The Chair called for a motion. Mr. Boyd made a motion, Mr. Chair, I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources propose the amendments to the elk regulations as present by staff. It was seconded Mr. Adams. The Chair called for a roll call vote: Ayes: Daniel, Terwilliger, Adams, Vincent, Boyd, Grimes, Parker, Brown, and Sadler

(The next three staff recommendations were voted on in one motion)

Chronic Wasting Disease: 4VAC15-90-10; 4VAC15-90-89; 4VAC15-90-260; 4VAC15-50-110; 4VAC15-90-293

Deer & Muzzleloader Hunting: 4VAC15-90-70; 4VAC15-90-80; 4VAC15-50-71; 4VAC15-90-90; 4VAC15-90-91

Harvest Reporting: 4VAC15-90-231; 4VAC15-50-81; 4VAC15-240-81; 4VAC15-90-241; 4VAC15-50-91; 4VAC15-240-91

The Chair called for a motion. Mr. Vincent made a motion. Mr. Chair, I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources propose the amendments to Chronic Wasting Disease, Deer & Muzzleloader Hunting, and Harvest Reporting regulations as presented by staff. It was second by Mr. Adams. The Chair called for a roll call vote. Ayes: Daniel, Terwilliger, Adams, Vincent, Boyd, Grimes, Parker, Brown, Sadler.

Virtual Speakers on Bear and Wild Turkey:

- Stephanie Taillon spoke regarding Bears
- Gary Norman spoke regarding Wild Turkey

Bear & Wild Turkey: 4VAC15-50-120; 4VAC15-240-20; 4VAC15-240-32; 4VAC15-240-40; 4VAC15-240-60

The Chair called for a motion. Mr. Boyd made a motion. Mr. Chair, I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources propose the amendments to bear and wild turkey regulations as present by staff with a request from the Board of Wildlife Resources to staff to monitor the Wild Turkey season closely. It was seconded by Mr. Adams. The Chair called for a roll call vote: Ayes: Daniel, Vincent, Terwilliger, Adams, Boyd, Grimes, Brown, and Sadler. Nay: Parker

Rabbits: 4VAC15-200-30; 4VAC15-200-11; 4VAC15-200-12

The Chair called for a motion. Mr. Boyd made a motion, Mr. Chair, I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources propose the amendments to the rabbit regulations as presented by staff. Mr. Daniel amended the motion to include “for ultimate disposal in a permitted landfill” under section 4VAC15-200-12. It was seconded by Mr. Adams. The Chair called for a roll call vote: Ayes: Daniel, Vincent, Terwilliger, Adams, Boyd, Grimes, Parker, Brown, and Sadler.

Wildlife Diversity: 4VAC15-20-130; 4VAC15-30-40; 4VAC15-360-60; 4VAC15-360-10

The Chair called for a motion. Mr. Adams made a motion, Mr. Chair, I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources propose the amendments to Wildlife Diversity regulations as presented by staff. It was seconded by Mr. Sadler. The Chair called for a roll call vote. Ayes: Daniel, Terwilliger, Adams, Vincent, Boyd, Grimes, Parker, Brown, Sadler

After Dr. Anderson completed the presentations on the Wildlife Regulation recommendations, the Chair called for a break at 1:05 pm

The Chair resumed the meeting at 1:18 pm

Virtual Speakers on Definitions and Miscellaneous: 4VAC15-20-260

- Stephanie Taillon spoke regarding the Coyote and Furbearer hunting contest
- Molly Armus spoke regarding the Coyote and Furbearer hunting contest
- Susan Tomiak spoke regarding the Coyote and Furbearer hunting contest
- Ben Shrader spoke regarding the Coyote and Furbearer hunting contest
- Cathy Liss spoke regarding the Coyote and Furbearer hunting contest
- Heidi Crosky spoke regarding the Coyote and Furbearer hunting contest
- Joseph Strosnider spoke regarding the Coyote and Furbearer hunting contest
- Delegate Will Wampler spoke regarding the Coyote and Furbearer hunting contest
- Gillian McPhee spoke regarding the Coyote and Furbearer hunting contest
- Kyle Crickenberger spoke regarding the Coyote and Furbearer hunting contest
- Alex Poole spoke regarding the Coyote and Furbearer hunting contest
- Nathaniel Brookbank spoke regarding the Coyote and Furbearer hunting contest
- Jason Groseclose spoke regarding the Coyote and Furbearer hunting contest
- Ryan Borum spoke regarding the Coyote and Furbearer hunting contest
- Jason Hiles spoke regarding the Coyote and Furbearer hunting contest
- Brooks Arrington spoke regarding the Coyote and Furbearer hunting contest
- Alice Burton spoke regarding the Coyote and Furbearer hunting contest
- Beth Axelrod spoke regarding the Coyote and Furbearer hunting contest
- Melanie Brandon spoke regarding the Coyote and Furbearer hunting contest

(The next three regulations were voted on in one motion.)

Lands and Access: 4VAC15-20-100; 4VAC15-20-150; 4VAC15-20-151; 4VAC15-20-152

General: 4VAC15-40-220; 4VAC15-40-240

Definitions & Miscellaneous: 4VAC15-20-240 and 4VAC15-20-260

The Chair called for a motion. Dr. Parker made a motion. Mr. Chair, I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources propose the amendments to the Lands and Access, General and Definitions & Miscellaneous regulations as presented by staff. It was seconded by Mr. Vincent. The Chair called for a roll call vote: Ayes: Daniel, Vincent, Terwilliger, Sadler; Nays: Parker, Adams, Boyd, Grimes, and Brown. The motion failed.

Ayes: 4 Nays: 5

The Board discussed and decided to separate the regulations to address the public comments on 4VAC15-20-260

(Lands and Access and General were voted on in one motion)

Lands and Access: 4VAC15-20-100; 4VAC15-20-150; 4VAC15-20-151; 4VAC15-20-152

General: 4VAC15-40-220; 4VAC15-40-240

The Chair called for a motion. Mr. Boyd made a motion. Mr. Chair, I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources propose the amendments to Lands & Access regulations and General regulation as presented by staff. It was seconded by Mr. Adams. The Chair called for a roll call vote. Ayes: Daniel, Terwilliger, Adams, Vincent, Boyd, Grimes, Parker, Brown, Sadler

Definitions & Miscellaneous: 4VAC15-20-240

The Chair called for a motion. Mr. Adams made a motion, Mr. Chair, I move that the Department of Wildlife Resources propose the amendments to Definitions and Miscellaneous regulation of 4VAC15-20-240 as presented by staff. It was seconded Ms. Terwilliger. The Chair called for a roll call vote. Ayes: Daniel, Vincent, Terwilliger, Adams, Boyd, Grimes, Parker, Brown, Sadler

Definitions & Miscellaneous: 4VAC15-20-260

After further discussion by the Board:

The Chair called for a motion. Mr. Adams made a motion. Mr. Chair, I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources table 4VAC15-20-260 for staff to study the coyote population. The motion did not pass for lack of a second motion.

The Chair called for a motion. Dr. Parker made a motion. Mr. Chair, I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources table the 4VAC15-20-260 recommendation and have staff gather more information and data on this topic. It was seconded by Mr. Adams. The Chair called for a roll call vote. Ayes: Daniel, Vincent, Terwilliger, Sadler, Parker, Adams, Boyd, Grimes and Brown.

Finance, Audit, and Compliance Committee Report:

The Chair called on Mr. Brian Vincent to give an update on the March 16, 2021 Finance, Audit, and Compliance Committee meeting.

Mr. Vincent gave an update on the virtual March 16, 2021 Finance, Audit, and Compliance Committee meeting.

Mr. Vincent called on Mr. Darin Moore to present the Internal Audit Charter.

Mr. Moore gave an update on the Internal Audit Charter.

The Chair asked if there were any comments or questions from the public and the Board.

The Chair thanked Mr. Moore for his Charter update.

The Chair called for a motion. Mr. Vincent made a motion. Mr. Chair, I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources adopt the update on the Internal Audit Charter. It was seconded by Mr. Sadler. The Chair called for a roll call vote: Ayes: Daniel, Vincent, Terwilliger, Adams, Boyd, Grimes, Parker, Brown, and Sadler

Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee Report:

The Chair called on Ms. Karen Terwilliger to give an update on the March 17, 2021 Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee meeting.

Ms. Terwilliger gave an update on the March 17, 2021 virtual Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee meeting.

Ms. Terwilliger called on Mr. Tom Guess to present the Final Action on the Governance Manual and Committee Charters.

Mr. Guess presented Governance Manual and Committee Charters language changes.

The Chair asked if there were any comments or questions from the public and the Board.

The Chair thanked Mr. Guess for his presentation.

The Chair called for a motion. Mr. Adams made a motion, I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources adopt the updated changes for the Governance Manual and Committees Charters. It was seconded by Mr. Vincent. The Chair called for a roll call vote. Ayes: Daniel, Terwilliger, Adams, Vincent, Boyd, Grimes, Parker, Brown, Sadler.

Director's Report:

The Board Chair called on Executive Director Ryan Brown for his report: The Director

- Commented on how gratifying to see staff recognized at DWR.
- Called on Mr. Tom Guess for a Legislative Update.
- Gave an update on the state budget and the 5% raise that State employees would be receiving July 2021.
- Congratulated Dr. Mike Bednarski on his fast and efficient efforts on a Zebra Mussel situation that popped up recently.
- Commented on HRBT is on track for breeding season, barges are on site.

- Advised the 2 new board members that we would be having an orientation for them soon.
- Announced that Governor Northam visited the Aquatic Wildlife Conservation Center and the Buller Fish Cultural Station in Marion, VA.
- Announced the Run for the Wild will be held 5/21/21.
- Thanked the Board for their participation in the meetings and reminded the Board that this is the FIRST Board to pass a regulation regarding incidental take of migratory birds.

Chair's Report:

The Board Chair thanked Board members for attending and thanked staff for making it possible through Teleconference and virtual means.

The Board Chair appointed the Nominations Committee for the 2021 Chair and Vice Chair elections.

- Mamie Parker – Chair
- Tom Sadler
- Leon Boyd

The Next Meeting Date:

The Chair announced that the next meeting date will be Thursday, May 27, 2021

Closed Session:

The Chair announced there would be a Closed Session. A motion was made by Ms. Terwilliger and seconded by Mr. Sadler. The Chair called for a roll call vote: Daniel, Terwilliger, Adams, Vincent, Boyd, Grimes, Brown, and Sadler

*Closed Meeting Motion
March 18, 2021*

Mr. Chair,

I move that the Board go into a closed meeting pursuant to Section 2.2-3711.A.1 of the Code of Virginia for discussion or consideration of employment, assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of the Department of Wildlife Resources specifically regarding:

(i) The performance of the Director.

This closed meeting will be attended only by members of the Board. However, pursuant to Section 2.2-3712(F), the Board requests the Department Executive Director as it believes his presence will reasonably aid the Board in its consideration of topics that are the subject of the

meeting. The Board Secretary took a roll call vote. Ayes: Daniel, Vincent, Terwilliger, Boyd, Sadler, Adams, Parker, Grimes, and Brown

The Board went into Closed Session at: 3:30 pm

The Board reconvened from the Closed Session at 4:00 pm

The Chairman called on Ms. Terwilliger to read the Certification of Closed Meeting.

*Certification of Closed Meeting
March 18, 2021*

WHEREAS, the Board of Wildlife Resources conducted a closed meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom Information Act; and

WHEREAS, Section 2.2-3712.D of the Code requires a certification by this Board that such closed meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Wildlife Resources hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification resolution applies, and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered by the Board.

It was seconded by Mr. Sadler.

The Chair called for a roll call vote. Ayes: Daniel, Vincent, Terwilliger, Adams, Boyd, Grimes, Brown and Sadler

The Chair asked if there were any comments or questions from the Board.

The Chair thanked the Executive Director and staff for making today's meeting possible and thanked Board members for their attendance and the work they continue to do for DWR during these times and asked if anyone had any further comments for today's meeting.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:10 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Frances Boswell
/s/

2021-22 WILDLIFE REGULATION REVIEW AND AMENDMENT PROCESS

BOARD REGULATION PROPOSALS
Staff Final Recommendations



CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

2021-22 Wildlife Regulation Process

Oct 12 – Dec 11, 2020 -- Public Scoping Period: public comments solicited via web-based input forms, staffs contact constituent groups and/or individuals to assess regulatory concerns

January 20 & 21, 2021 – Wildlife & Boat Committee/DWR Board Meetings: preliminary review of issues, solicit Board regulatory concepts

Dec 14, 2020 – February 2021: Staff committees review input, analyze data, and consult with constituent groups and individual stakeholders to develop proposal-stage regulation amendment recommendations

March 16 & 18, 2021 – Wildlife & Boat Committee/DWR Board Meetings: Staffs present proposal-stage recommendations to the Board, public comments accepted on presented recommendations and additional recommendations, Board deliberates and proposes regulation amendments

March 26 – May 10, 2021: Regulation Proposal Comment Period: public input is solicited on the Board's proposed regulation amendments

May 17 & 27, 2021 – Wildlife & Boat Committee/DWR Board Meeting: Staffs present final recommendations to the Board, public comments accepted on proposed amendments, Board deliberates and votes on proposed regulation amendments

August 1, 2021: Effective date for regulations except 4VAC15-360-10 which will be effective July 1, 2021



Public Comments

Online Public Comments – 597

Elk – 86

Chronic Wasting Disease – 50

Deer & Muzzleloader – 67

Harvest Reporting – 18

Bear & Wild Turkey – 177

Rabbits – 18

Wildlife Diversity – 125

Lands & Access – 28

Definitions & Misc. – 10

General - 18

Email/Hand-Written Public Comments – 22

Total Public Comments - 619



Comment Summary & Staff Recommendations

- **Generally, public comment was supportive of the proposals**
- **Significant public interest in:**
 - 4VAC15-240-40 (All-day spring turkey hunting) where the public voiced concern for potential biological impacts to the turkey population
 - 4VAC15-360-10 (Taking of amphibians, reptiles, etc. for personal use) where comments were supportive of the Department's effort to address population impacts associated with personal use of these species but some specific groups interested in personal use expressed concern with new limits
- **Unless otherwise noted in this presentation, staff recommends adopting the amendments in the form they were proposed**



Division of Legislative Services

- Effected several stylistic and grammatical changes to the proposals
 - Changes do not impact intent and implications of proposals
1. **4VAC15-20-250 (New) Definitions; Elk Management Zone** –incorporated into 4VAC15-20-10 and designated as subsection B
 2. **4VAC15-90-550 (New) Special elk hunting license – Conservation License Program** – The definitions of “*Individual, cooperators, or wildlife conservation organizations*” and “*Proceeds*” moved and designated as subsection A; subsequent subsections renumbered
 3. **4VAC15-90-89 Earn a buck (EAB)** – Subsections renumbered; grammatical changes effected to clarify regulation language and references to localities subject to the provisions of each subsection
 4. **4VAC15-200-11 (New) Wild rabbit carcass importation** – definitions of “*Import*” and “*Wild Rabbit*” were moved to 4VAC15-200-15 (New); importation requirements designated as 4VAC15-200-50 (New)
 5. **4VAC15-200-12 (New) Disposal of wild rabbit parts** –designated 4VAC15-200-60 (New)



Elk

4VAC15-20-10. Definitions; generally (formerly 4VAC15-20-250). (pg. 5)

- Defines zone as Buchanan, Dickenson, and Wise counties

4VAC15-20-65. Hunting, trapping, and fishing license and permit fees. (pg. 6)

- Establish Resident (\$40) & Nonresident (\$400) Special Elk Hunting License for Elk Management Zone
- Reduce Nonresident license fee for fishing designated stocked trout waters (\$46 to \$22)

4VAC15-90-500. Elk hunting outside the Elk Management Zone. (pg. 13)

- Maintains all existing hunting regulations for elk outside the EMZ from 4VAC15-90-85
- Establishes separate section within existing regulation chapter for regulations specific to elk



Elk

4VAC15-90-510. Elk hunting within the Elk Management Zone. (pg. 14)

- Establishes open season – Second Saturday in October through following Friday
- Outlines bag limit, blaze color, and license tag validation and reporting requirements

4VAC15-90-520. Special provisions for hunting elk within the Elk Management Zone. (pg. 15)

- Outlines provisions for field dressing harvested elk, wanton waste, hunting techniques, and youth/apprentice hunters being accompanied/supervised by another

4VAC15-90-530. Special elk hunting license – random drawing license program. (pg. 17)

- Outlines application period, application requirements, and notification and future eligibility of successful applicants



Elk

4VAC15-90-540. Special elk hunting license – Landowner License Program. (pg. 19)

- Establishes program to provide free public access to hunt elk on private lands
- Outlines program details including application deadline, application requirements, accrual of points toward receiving a special elk hunting license, and guidelines for use of the special elk hunting license

Recommended Modification – Remove language on selling the license; clarify that a fee may not be charged to hunt elk except as provided in program guidance document



Elk

4VAC15-90-550. Special elk hunting license – Conservation License Program. (pg. 22)

- Establishes program to award a Special Elk Hunting License to a wildlife conservation organization
- Outlines program details including application deadline, application requirements, submission and review of organization's proposal, handling of proceeds generated, and transfer of Special Elk Hunting License to hunter

Recommended Modification – modify language of the regulation to better align the Department's program with the requirement of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration program

4VAC15-270-10. Size rifles for hunting bear and deer. (pg. 25)

- Includes elk in the list of species for which rifles $\geq .23$ caliber must be used for hunting
- Removes the word "killing" from the regulation to allow humane dispatch of these species in circumstances where firearms $< .23$ caliber would be the appropriate weapon choice



Elk

Motion

I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources adopt the proposed amendments to the elk regulations as presented by staff.



Chronic Wasting Disease

4VAC15-90-10. Open season; generally. (pg. 27)

- Creates early and late antlerless only firearms season in Clarke, Frederick, Shenandoah, and Warren counties (not on National Forest)
- Creates early antlerless only firearms season in Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison, Orange, and Rappahannock counties
- Creates opportunity for either early or late antlerless only deer seasons in Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison, Orange, Page, and Rappahannock counties

Recommended Modification – Change “disease focus area” to “disease focus zone”

4VAC15-90-89. Earn a buck (EAB). (pg. 37)

- Reformats text into concise, more easily understood language
- Initiates EAB requirement in 9 counties (6- deer management; 3 – CWD management)
- Reduces # of antlerless deer which need to be harvested under EAB in 3 counties (CWD)
- Increased # of antlerless deer which need to be harvested under EAB in 2 counties (deer)

Recommended Modification – Remove “east of the Dismal Swamp line” reference in subsections E and F



Chronic Wasting Disease

4VAC15-90-260. Hunting with dogs prohibited in certain counties and areas. (pg. 42)

4VAC15-50-110. Use of dogs in hunting bear. (pg. 43)

- Initiation of early antlerless only deer season in several counties to address CWD impacted the existing language of these regulations
- Maintains all existing opportunities for hunting deer and bear with dogs

4VAC15-90-293. Unauthorized cervid parts, excretions, and carcass importation, movement, possession, and use. (pg. 44)

- Adds “cleaned jaw bones” to list of importable carcass parts
- Enables transport to authorized locations in other states
- Enables transport between separate DMAs unless prohibited
- Provides mechanism to allow transport from areas of low-risk to areas of high-risk, but prohibit transport from areas of high-risk to low-risk within a DMA



Deer & Muzzleloader Hunting

4VAC15-90-70. Archery hunting. (pg. 47)

- Updates Code reference for “Common Interest Communities”

4VAC15-90-80. Muzzleloading gun hunting. (pg. 49)

- Increases either-sex hunting days in Augusta and Dickenson (private lands) counties
- Clarifies types of muzzleloading weapons which can be used
- Accommodates new .40 caliber muzzleloader

4VAC15-50-71. Muzzleloading gun hunting. (pg. 52)

- Clarifies types of muzzleloading weapons which can be used
- Accommodates new .40 caliber muzzleloader



Deer & Muzzleloader Hunting

4VAC15-90-90. Bag limit, bonus deer permits and special antlerless provision for youth hunters. (pg. 54)

- Established unlimited daily bag limit in cities and towns (except Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach)
- Creates uniform 1 deer per day bag limit on national forest, department-owned, and department-managed lands
- Clarifies that national forest lands in Amherst, Bedford, and Nelson counties are included in the West of the Blue Ridge bag limit

4VAC15-90-91. General firearms season either-sex deer hunting days. (pg. 56)

- Increases either-sex hunting days in 11 counties or portions of the county
- Increases either-sex hunting days on 2 WMAs
- Decreases either-sex hunting days on 3 WMAs
- Removes 1 WMA from countywide season due to increase in either-sex hunting days in that county



Harvest Reporting

4VAC15-90-231. Validating tags and checking deer by licensee or permittee. (pg. 65)

4VAC15-50-81. Validating tags and checking bear and tooth submission by licensee or permittee. (pg. 68)

4VAC15-240-81. Validating tags and checking turkey by licensee. (pg. 70)

- Modified to reflect transition to 100% electronic harvest reporting beginning Sept 1, 2021



Harvest Reporting

4VAC15-90-241. Checking deer by persons exempt from license requirement or holding a license authorization number. (pg. 72)

4VAC15-50-91. Checking bear and tooth submission by persons exempt from license requirement or holding a license authorization number. (pg. 74)

4VAC15-240-91. Checking turkey by persons exempt from license requirement or holding a license authorization number. (pg. 76)

- Modified to reflect transition to 100% electronic harvest reporting beginning Sept 1, 2021



Chronic Wasting Disease, Deer & Muzzleloader, and Harvest Reporting

Motion

I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources adopt the proposed amendments to the chronic wasting disease, deer & muzzleloader hunting, and harvest reporting regulations as presented by staff.



Bear & Wild Turkey

4VAC15-50-120. Bear hound training season. (pg. 79)

- Correct error in text to add Dinwiddie County which should have been included in 2013

4VAC15-240-20. Open season; certain counties and areas; two-week turkey season. (pg. 80)

4VAC15-240-32. Open season; certain counties and areas; six-week turkey season. (pg. 81)

- Moves Orange County from two-week and places it in the six-week season



Bear & Wild Turkey

4VAC15-240-40. Open season; spring season for bearded turkeys. (pg. 82)

- Establishes all-day hunting throughout the spring turkey season

Recommended Modification – Reduce the timeframe for all-day spring turkey hunting from full-season to the last 20 days of the season

4VAC15-240-60. Archery hunting. (pg. 84)

- Makes season consistent with existing statewide archery season for deer and bear



Bear & Wild Turkey

Motion

I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources adopt the proposed amendments to the bear & wild turkey regulations as presented by staff.



Rabbits

4VAC15-200-15. Definitions (formerly 4VAC15-200-11). (pg. 86)

- Define the terms “Import” and “Wild Rabbit” as used in Chapter 200

4VAC15-200-30. Trapping with box traps. (pg. 87)

- Would restrict transport of live-trapped rabbits to the county of origin (RHDV2)

4VAC15-200- 50. Unauthorized wild rabbit carcass importation and possession (formerly 4VAC15-200-11). (pg. 88)

- Would prohibit importing whole wild rabbit carcasses from other states, except those which a fully field dressed (RHDV2)

4VAC15-200-60. Disposal of wild rabbit parts (formerly 4VAC15-200-12) (pg. 89)

- Would prohibit wild rabbit carcasses and carcass parts from being discarded/disposed of on the landscape
- Requires such carcasses and/or parts to be buried (2-feet deep), incinerated, or bagged and disposed of in household trash for disposal in a landfill



Wildlife Diversity

4VAC15-20-130. Endangered and threatened species; adoption of federal list; additional species enumerated. (pg. 91)

- Update the date reference for the federal list
- Remove barking treefrog (ST); add red-cockaded woodpecker (SE) and Clinch dace (SE); retain black rail (SE) to reflect status in Virginia
- Reduce burden of incidental take requirements for little brown and tricolored bats

Recommended Modification – Cite the most recent version of the Federal Endangered and Threatened Species List which was updated on April 30, 2021

4VAC15-30-40. Importation requirements, possession, and sale of nonnative (exotic) animals. (pg. 101)

4VAC15-360-60. Prohibit the sale of salamander and madtom species. (pg. 110)

- Removes Mexican axolotl as a species that cannot be imported, possessed, or sold



Wildlife Diversity

4VAC15-360-10. Taking aquatic invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, and nongame fish for personal use. (pg. 111)

- Limit personal possession of native and naturalized amphibians and reptiles to 1 individual of any species per physical address
- Prohibit personal possession of any native and naturalized amphibians and reptiles designated as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the 2015 Wildlife Action Plan
- Prohibit use and sale of salamanders as bait
- Require appropriate permit for collection of amphibians and reptiles on all state and federal lands
- Establish online registry to report possession of native and naturalized amphibians and reptiles held prior to effect date of this regulation
- Require snapping turtles harvested for personal use to have a minimum curved-line carapace length of 13 inches



Rabbit and Wildlife Diversity

Motion

I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources adopt the proposed amendments to the rabbit and wildlife diversity regulations as presented by staff.



Lands & Access

4VAC15-20-100. Prohibited use of vehicles on DWR-owned lands. (pg. 116)

- Allow Class I and II electric power-assisted bicycles; prohibit Class III bicycles

4VAC15-20-150. Structures on department-owned lands and national forest lands. (pg. 118)

- Establish time frame & duration for placing/leaving portable tree stand on DWR lands

4VAC15-20-151. Manipulation of vegetation on DWR-owned lands. (pg. 120)

- Prohibits planting, manipulating, cutting, mutilating, destroying, or removing vegetation
- Prohibits removing minerals, artifacts, or other property

4VAC15-20-152. Target shooting on DWR-owned lands. (pg. 121)

- Prohibits target shooting except on designated ranges



Definitions & Miscellaneous

4VAC15-20-240. Use of drones for certain activities prohibited. (pg. 123)

- Modifies language to specify a time restriction for use of a drone as it relates to scouting/hunting purposes



General

4VAC15-40-220. Use of deadfalls prohibited; restricted use of snares. (pg. 125)

- Redefine the maximum permissible snare loop size from a diameter measurement to an equivalent circumference measurement

4VAC15-40-240. Animal population control. (pg. 126)

- Authorizes the Director to issue special permits to reduce game and fur-bearing animal populations where existing statutory and regulatory options are not applicable



Lands & Access, Definitions & Miscellaneous, and General

Motion

I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources adopt the proposed amendments to the lands & access, definitions & miscellaneous, and general regulations as presented by staff.



Questions



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES



WILDLIFE REGULATION PROPOSALS

May 2021

DIVISION OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICE, VIRGINIA REGISTER OF REGULATION

Formatting and Grammatical Edits Effecting the Board Proposals

Background

Following the March 27, 2021 Board of Wildlife Resources and as required by the Code of Virginia, the Board's wildlife regulation proposals were submitted to the Virginia Register of Regulations. Following submission of the Board's wildlife regulation proposals, staff with the Commonwealth's Division of Legislative Services which publish the Virginia Register of Regulation effected several stylistic and grammatical changes to the numbering and format of the Board's proposals. ***These changes do not impact the intent, content, or implications of the Board's proposals.*** However, these changes have resulted in changes in the section designation, formatting of subsections, and grammatical corrections to the regulation language. Changes effected to the Board's wildlife regulation proposals are summarized in detail below.

Summary of Division of Legislative Services changes

1. ***4VAC15-20-250 (New) Definitions; Elk Management Zone*** – This proposal was incorporated into an existing regulation (4VAC15-20-10). Within 4VAC15-20-10 the definition of the Elk Management Zone has been designated as subsection B.
2. ***4VAC15-90-550 (New) Special elk hunting license – Conservation License Program*** – The definitions of “*Individual, cooperators, or wildlife conservation organizations*” and “*Proceeds*” has been removed from the main body of the regulation language and designated as subsection A within the regulation. Placing these definitions in subsection A resulted in changes to the enumeration of the remaining subsections.
3. ***4VAC15-90-89 Earn a buck (EAB)*** – Several formatting changes were made to the subsection structure of this regulation, and all subsections have been enumerated differently. Additionally, grammatical changes were effected in most subsections to clarify regulation language and references to localities subject to the provisions of each subsection.
4. ***4VAC15-200-11 (New) Wild rabbit carcass importation*** – The definitions of “*Import*” and “*Wild Rabbit*” were moved to 4VAC15-200-15 (New) and entitled “*Definitions*”. The importation requirements for whole carcasses or carcass parts of wild rabbits were moved to 4VAC15-200-50 (New) and will keep the original title of this proposal.
5. ***4VAC15-200-12 (New) Disposal of wild rabbit parts*** – This regulation has been designated 4VAC15-200-60. No other changes were effected.

Hunting & Trapping Regulation Proposals: Final Staff Recommendation Summary

ELK REGULATIONS

4VAC15-20-10 (formerly 4VAC15-20-250)	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-20-65	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-90-500 (New)	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-90-510 (New)	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-90-520 (New)	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-90-530 (New)	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-90-540 (New)	<i>Recommended as proposed, WITH MODIFICATION</i>
4VAC15-90-550 (New)	<i>Recommended as proposed, WITH MODIFICATION</i>
4VAC15-270-10	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE REGULATIONS

4VAC15-90-10	<i>Recommended as proposed, WITH MODIFICATION</i>
4VAC15-90-89	<i>Recommended as proposed, WITH MODIFICATION</i>
4VAC15-90-260	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-50-110	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-90-293	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>

DEER & MUZZLELOADER HUNTING REGULATIONS

4VAC15-90-70	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-90-80	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-50-71	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-90-90	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-90-91	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>

HARVEST REPORTING REGULATIONS

4VAC15-90-231	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-50-81	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-240-81	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-90-241	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-50-91	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-240-91	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>

BEAR & WILD TURKEY REGULATIONS

4VAC15-50-120	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-240-20	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-240-32	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-240-40	<i>Recommended as proposed, WITH MODIFICATION</i>
4VAC15-240-60	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>

RABBIT REGULATIONS

4VAC15-200-15 (New) – formerly 4VAC15-200-11(New)	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-200-30	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-200-50 (New) – formerly 4VAC15-200-11(New)	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>
4VAC15-200-60 (New) – formerly 4VAC15-200-12(New)	<i>Recommended as proposed</i>

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY REGULATIONS

4VAC15-20-130

Recommended as proposed, WITH MODIFICATION

4VAC15-30-40

Recommended as proposed

4VAC15-360-60

Recommended as proposed

4VAC15-360-10 (effective July 1, 2021)

*Recommended as proposed***LANDS & ACCESS PROGRAM REGULATIONS**

4VAC15-20-100

Recommended as proposed

4VAC15-20-150

Recommended as proposed

4VAC15-20-151 (New)

Recommended as proposed

4VAC15-20-152 (New)

*Recommended as proposed***DEFINITIONS & MISCELLANEOUS REGULATIONS**

4VAC15-20-240

*Recommended as proposed***GENERAL REGULATIONS**

4VAC15-40-220

Recommended as proposed

4VAC15-40-240

Recommended as proposed

Hunting & Trapping Regulation Proposals: Final Staff Recommendation Summaryii**Elk Regulations 4**

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Elk Regulations

4VAC15-20-10 – incorporation of 4VAC15-20-250 (New)
Definitions and Miscellaneous: In General: Definitions; generally

Summary:

The proposal is to define the Elk Management Zone in Virginia.

Proposed language of the amendment:

4VAC15-20-[25010]. Definitions; [~~“Elk Management Zone”~~ generally]

A. Words and phrases used in any regulations made by the board shall have the same meaning, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, as is given for such words and phrases in Title 29.1 (§ 29.1-100 et seq.) of the Code of Virginia.

B. The following word or term when used in this chapter shall have the following meaning unless the context indicates otherwise:

"Elk Management Zone" means the Counties of (i) Buchanan, (ii) Dickenson, and (iii) Wise, and the cities and towns therein.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

The Elk Management Zone (EMZ) is defined in the 2019-2028 Virginia Elk Management Plan that was endorsed by the Board of Wildlife Resources in March of 2019. The designation of the EMZ (i.e. Wise, Dickenson, and Buchanan Counties) serves to help guide the Department's management strategies and actions related to elk throughout Virginia. As outlined in the Elk Management Plan, the Department will manage elk to maintain a healthy and viable population within the EMZ. The proposal will define the counties that are within the EMZ and facilitate its use in other regulations.

4VAC15-20-65**Definitions and Miscellaneous: In General: Hunting, trapping, and fishing license and permit fees.****Summary:**

The proposal will (i) establish the fee for a special elk hunting license for residents and non-residents in accordance with § 29.1-305.01 and (ii) reduce the nonresident license fee for fishing in designated stocked trout waters.

Proposed language of the amendment:**4VAC15-20-65. Hunting, trapping, and fishing license and permit fees.**

In accordance with the authority of the board under subdivision 16 of § [29.1-103](#) of the Code of Virginia, the following fees are established for hunting, trapping, and fishing licenses and permits:

Virginia Resident Licenses to Hunt	
Type license	Fee
One-year Resident License to Hunt, for licensees 16 years of age or older	\$22.00
Two-year Resident License to Hunt, for licensees 16 years of age or older	\$43.00
Three-year Resident License to Hunt, for licensees 16 years of age or older	\$64.00
Four-year Resident License to Hunt, for licensees 16 years of age or older	\$85.00
County or City Resident License to Hunt in County or City of Residence Only, for licensees 16 years of age or older	\$15.00
Resident Senior Citizen Annual License to Hunt, for licensees 65 years of age or older	\$8.00
Resident Junior License to Hunt, for licensees 12 through 15 years of age, optional for licensees younger than 12 years of age	\$7.50
Resident Youth Combination License to Hunt, and to hunt bear, deer, and turkey, to hunt with archery equipment during archery hunting season, and to hunt with muzzleloading guns during muzzleloading hunting season, for licensees younger than 16 years of age	\$15.00
Resident Sportsman License to Hunt and Freshwater Fish, and to hunt bear, deer, and turkey, to hunt with archery equipment during archery hunting season, to hunt with muzzleloading guns during muzzleloading hunting season, to fish in designated stocked trout waters (also listed under Virginia Resident Licenses to Fish)	\$99.00
Resident Hunting License for Partially Disabled Veterans	\$11.00
Resident Infant Lifetime License to Hunt	\$130.00
Resident Junior Lifetime License to Hunt, for licensees younger than 12 years of age at the time of purchase	\$260.00

Resident Lifetime License to Hunt, for licensees at the time of purchase:	
through 44 years of age	\$265.00
45 through 50 years of age	\$215.00
51 through 55 years of age	\$165.00
56 through 60 years of age	\$115.00
61 through 64 years of age	\$65.00
65 years of age and older	\$25.00
Totally and Permanently Disabled Resident Special Lifetime License to Hunt	\$15.00
Service-Connected Totally and Permanently Disabled Veteran Resident Lifetime License to Hunt or Freshwater Fish (also listed under Virginia Resident Licenses to Fish)	no fee
Virginia Resident Licenses for Additional Hunting Privileges	
Type license or permit	Fee
Resident Deer and Turkey Hunting License, for licensees 16 years of age or older	\$22.00
Resident Junior Deer and Turkey Hunting License, for licensees younger than 16 years of age	\$7.50
Resident Archery License to Hunt with archery equipment during archery hunting season	\$17.00
Resident Bear Hunting License	\$20.00
Resident Muzzleloading License to Hunt during muzzleloading hunting season	\$17.00
Resident Bonus Deer Permit	\$17.00
Resident Fox Hunting License to hunt foxes on horseback with hounds without firearms (not required of an individual holding a general License to Hunt)	\$22.00
<u>Resident Special Elk Hunting License (not required outside of the Elk Management Zone and only awarded to individuals through a Department elk license program)</u>	<u>\$40.00</u>
Virginia Nonresident Licenses to Hunt	
Type license	Fee
Nonresident License to Hunt, for licensees 16 years of age or older	\$110.00
Nonresident Three-Day Trip License to Hunt	\$59.00
Nonresident Youth License to Hunt, for licensees:	

younger than 12 years of age	\$12.00
12 through 15 years of age	\$15.00
Nonresident Youth Combination License to Hunt, and to hunt bear, deer, and turkey, to hunt with archery equipment during archery hunting season, and to hunt with muzzleloading guns during muzzleloading hunting season, for licensees younger than 16 years of age	\$30.00
Nonresident Annual Hunting License for Partially Disabled Veterans	\$55.00
Nonresident Annual Hunting License for Totally and Permanently Disabled Veterans	\$27.50
Nonresident Infant Lifetime License to Hunt	\$275.00
Nonresident Lifetime License to Hunt	\$580.00
Virginia Nonresident Licenses for Additional Hunting Privileges	
Type license or permit	Fee
Nonresident Deer and Turkey Hunting License, for licensees:	
16 years of age or older	\$85.00
12 through 15 years of age	\$15.00
younger than 12 years of age	\$12.00
Nonresident Bear Hunting License	\$150.00
Nonresident Archery License to Hunt with archery equipment during archery hunting season	\$30.00
Nonresident Muzzleloading License to Hunt during muzzleloading hunting season	\$30.00
Nonresident Shooting Preserve License to Hunt within the boundaries of a licensed shooting preserve	\$22.00
Nonresident Bonus Deer Permit	\$30.00
Nonresident Fox Hunting License to hunt foxes on horseback with hounds without firearms (not required of an individual holding a general License to Hunt)	\$110.00
<u>Nonresident Special Elk Hunting License (not required outside of the Elk Management Zone and only awarded to individuals through a Department elk license program)</u>	<u>\$400.00</u>
Miscellaneous Licenses or Permits to Hunt	
Type license or permit	Fee

Waterfowl Hunting Stationary Blind in Public Waters License	\$22.50
Waterfowl Hunting Floating Blind in Public Waters License	\$40.00
Foxhound Training Preserve License	\$17.00
Public Access Lands for Sportsmen Permit to Hunt, Trap, or Fish on Designated Lands (also listed under Miscellaneous Licenses or Permits to Fish)	\$17.00

Virginia Resident and Nonresident Licenses to Trap	
Type license	Fee
One-year Resident License to Trap, for licensees 16 years of age or older	\$45.00
Two-year Resident License to Trap, for licensees 16 years of age or older	\$89.00
Three-year Resident License to Trap, for licensees 16 years of age or older	\$133.00
Four-year Resident License to Trap, for licensees 16 years of age or older	\$177.00
County or City Resident License to Trap in County or City of Residence Only	\$20.00
Resident Junior License to Trap, for licensees younger than 16 years of age	\$10.00
Resident Senior Citizen License to Trap, for licensees 65 years of age or older	\$8.00
Resident Senior Citizen Lifetime License to Trap, for licensees 65 years of age or older	\$25.00
Totally and Permanently Disabled Resident Special Lifetime License to Trap	\$15.00
Service-Connected Totally and Permanently Disabled Veteran Resident Lifetime License to Trap	\$15.00
Nonresident License to Trap	\$205.00
Virginia Resident Licenses to Fish	
Type license	Fee
One-year Resident License to Freshwater Fish	\$22.00
Two-year Resident License to Freshwater Fish	\$43.00
Three-year Resident License to Freshwater Fish	\$64.00
Four-year Resident License to Freshwater Fish	\$85.00
County or City Resident License to Freshwater Fish in County or City of Residence Only	\$15.00
Resident License to Freshwater Fish, for licensees 65 years of age or older	\$8.00
Resident License to Fish in Designated Stocked Trout Waters	\$22.00

Resident License to Freshwater and Saltwater Fish	\$38.50
Resident License to Freshwater Fish for Five Consecutive Days	\$13.00
Resident License to Freshwater and Saltwater Fish for Five Consecutive Days	\$23.00
Resident Sportsman License to Hunt and Freshwater Fish, and to hunt bear, deer, and turkey, to hunt with archery equipment during archery hunting season, to hunt with muzzleloading guns during muzzleloading hunting season, to fish in designated stocked trout waters (also listed under Virginia Resident Licenses to Hunt)	\$99.00
Resident Fishing License for Partially Disabled Veterans	\$11.00
Resident Infant Lifetime License to Fish	\$130.00
Resident Special Lifetime License to Freshwater Fish, for licensees at the time of purchase:	
through 44 years of age	\$265.00
45 through 50 years of age	\$215.00
51 through 55 years of age	\$165.00
56 through 60 years of age	\$115.00
61 through 64 years of age	\$65.00
65 years of age and older	\$25.00
Resident Special Lifetime License to Fish in Designated Stocked Trout Waters, for licensees at the time of purchase:	
through 44 years of age	\$265.00
45 through 50 years of age	\$215.00
51 through 55 years of age	\$165.00
56 through 60 years of age	\$115.00
61 through 64 years of age	\$65.00
65 years of age and older	\$25.00
Totally and Permanently Disabled Resident Special Lifetime License to Freshwater Fish	\$15.00
Service-Connected Totally and Permanently Disabled Veteran Resident Lifetime License to Hunt and Freshwater Fish (also listed under Virginia Resident Licenses to Hunt)	no fee

Virginia Nonresident Licenses to Fish	
Type license	Fee
Nonresident License to Freshwater Fish	\$46.00
Nonresident License to Freshwater Fish in Designated Stocked Trout Waters	\$46.00 <u>\$22.00</u>
Nonresident License to Freshwater and Saltwater Fish	\$70.00
Nonresident Fishing License for Partially Disabled Veterans	\$23.00
Nonresident Annual Fishing License for Totally and Permanently Disabled Veterans	\$11.50
Nonresident License to Freshwater Fish for One Day	\$7.00
Nonresident License to Freshwater Fish for Five Consecutive Days	\$20.00
Nonresident License to Freshwater and Saltwater Fish for Five Consecutive Days	\$30.00
Nonresident Infant Lifetime License to Fish	\$275.00
Nonresident Special Lifetime License to Freshwater Fish	\$580.00
Nonresident Special Lifetime License to in Fish in Designated Stocked Trout Waters	\$580.00
Miscellaneous Licenses or Permits to Fish	
Type license or permit	Fee
Permit to Fish for One Day at Board-Designated Stocked Trout Fishing Areas with Daily Use Fees	\$7.00
Public Access Lands for Sportsmen Permit to Hunt, Trap, or Fish on Designated Lands (also listed under Miscellaneous Licenses or Permits to Hunt)	\$17.00
Special Guest Fishing License	\$60.00

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

Special Elk Hunting License: With the establishment of § 29.1-305.01, authority was given to the Board of Wildlife Resources to create a Special Elk Hunting License that would be applicable within the Elk Management Zone. The fees for the Special Elk Hunting License and any associated application for that license were also outlined within § 29.1-305.01. The proposal would define those outlined license fees, in regulation, for non-residents and residents along with the other license and permits that the Department administers.

The Special Elk Hunting License would only be valid within the Elk Management Zone and only be available through the license programs and procedures that the department outlines through other elk hunting regulation proposals.

Nonresident License to Freshwater Fish in Designated Stocked Trout Waters: With the passage of SB-1402, § 29.1-311 was modified to allow resident trout anglers to use a trip license to trout fish. This modification also eliminated the allowance for a 1-day trip license to be used by a nonresident to trout fish. These modifications were the first part of a plan proposed by the Aquatic Wildlife Resources Division to reduce trout fishing costs for non-residents. The second part involves reducing the cost of the nonresident trout license to equal that of the resident trout license, which is \$22.00.

4VAC15-90-500 (New)
Game: Deer: Elk hunting outside the Elk Management Zone

Summary:

The proposal will modify the existing elk hunting regulation section to become applicable only to those areas outside of the Elk Management Zone as elk hunting within the Elk Management Zone will be established in a separate regulation section.

Proposed language of the amendment:

4VAC15-90-~~85~~500. Elk hunting outside the Elk Management Zone.

~~A. Closed season. There shall be a continuous closed season for elk (Cervus elapses) hunting in Buchanan, Dickenson, and Wise counties.~~

~~B~~A. Open season. Except as otherwise provided by [4VAC15-90-510](#), it shall be lawful to hunt elk of either sex during (i) the general firearms deer seasons (as prescribed by [4VAC15-90-10](#) and [4VAC15-90-23](#)), (ii) the special archery seasons (as prescribed by [4VAC15-90-70](#)), and (iii) the special muzzleloading seasons (as prescribed by [4VAC15-90-80](#)) with bag limits as prescribed in [4VAC15-90-90](#).

~~C~~B. ~~Validating tags and checking elk by licensee or permittee.~~ Upon killing an elk, any licensed or permitted hunter shall validate a tag, ~~on their special license for hunting deer and turkey or bonus deer permit, or special permit~~ and check the elk in accordance with [4VAC15-90-231](#). ~~At the time of checking Upon receiving a confirmation number,~~ the hunter must call the department ~~upon receiving a check card or confirmation number~~ to schedule an inspection of the carcass and the site of kill for the collection of biological samples ~~for disease testing.~~

~~D~~C. Checking elk by persons exempt from license requirements or holding a license authorization number. Upon killing an elk, any person (I) exempt from license requirement as prescribed in § [29.1-301](#) of the Code of Virginia, (ii) issued a complimentary license as prescribed in § [29.1-339](#) of the Code of Virginia, (iii) holding a permanent license issued pursuant to § [29.1-301](#) E, or (iv) holding a Virginia license authorization number issued by a telephone or electronic media agent pursuant to § [29.1-327](#) B of the Code of Virginia shall check the elk in accordance with [4VAC15-90-241](#). ~~At the time of checking Upon receiving a confirmation number,~~ the hunter must call the department ~~upon receiving a check card or confirmation number~~ to schedule an inspection of the carcass and the site of kill for the collection of biological samples ~~for disease testing.~~

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

With the passage of § 29.1-305.01 and the associated creation of a Special Elk Hunting License within the Elk Management Zone (EMZ), separate regulations needed to be established for elk hunting outside and within the EMZ. The proposal would clarify that elk can be harvested outside of the EMZ utilizing the special license for hunting deer and turkey or bonus deer permit and outline requirements for scheduling an inspection of the animal for the collection of biological samples. This proposal would also adjust language relating to the harvest reporting process to be consistent with other Department regulation proposals on harvest reporting requirements.

4VAC15-90-510 (New)
Game: Deer: Elk hunting within the Elk Management Zone

Summary:

This proposal outlines the seasons, bag limits, and tag validation associated with administering the hunting of elk within the Elk Management Zone.

Proposed language of the amendment:

4VAC15-90-510. Elk hunting within the Elk Management Zone.

- A. Open season; generally. It shall be lawful to hunt elk within the Elk Management Zone from the second Saturday in October through the following Friday, both dates inclusive.
- B. The seasonal bag limit for elk shall be one per season as prescribed on the special elk hunting license. The department shall determine the number and type of special elk hunting licenses distributed within a season and license year.
- C. Except as provided in 4VAC15-90-540 or 4VAC15-90-550 individuals selected to purchase a special elk hunting license shall not be eligible to receive a subsequent special elk hunting license for a period of three years.
- D. All licensed elk hunters and persons accompanying elk hunters are required to wear or display a blaze color as described in § 29.1-530.1 of the Code of Virginia.
- E. Upon killing an elk, any licensed hunter shall validate the tag on the hunter's special elk hunting license and report the elk in accordance with procedures outlined in 4VAC15-90-231. Upon receiving a confirmation number, the hunter must call the department to schedule an inspection of the carcass and the site of kill for the collection of biological samples.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

With the passage of § 29.1-305.01 and the associated creation of a Special Elk Hunting License within the Elk Management Zone (EMZ), separate regulations needed to be established for elk hunting outside and within the EMZ. The proposed sections related to season bag limits, blaze color requirement, and tag validation and reporting are all consistent with subsequent sections in other big game species regulations. The requirement allowing the Department the opportunity to collect biological samples is consistent with regulations for hunting elk outside the EMZ. In accordance with the VA Elk Management Plan, biological sampling of elk is conducted on harvested or dead elk as part of a proactive disease sampling effort. Bag limits will be established to “manage elk in a manner that maintains a healthy and viable population within the EMZ” as prescribed by Conservation Goal 1 in the VA Elk Management Plan. The proposed 7-day open season would provide a balance between providing an adequate opportunity for hunters to pursue elk and minimizing potential disturbance on the overall elk herd. Since the number of special elk hunting license will be limited and only administered through a Department elk program, establishing an ineligibility period for an individual following a successful selection for a special elk hunting license, promotes a fair and equitable administration of licenses.

4VAC15-90-520 (New)

Game: Deer: Special provisions for hunting elk within the Elk Management Zone

Summary:

The proposal establishes provisions related to the methods of hunting elk within the Elk Management Zone.

Proposed language of the amendment:

4VAC15-90-520. Special provisions for hunting elk within the Elk Management Zone

- A. It shall be unlawful for any person to destroy the identity of the sex of any harvested elk unless and until requirements outlined in this section are met. Successful elk hunters are allowed to dismember the carcass to pack it out from the place of kill as long as evidence of the sex remains naturally attached to a major portion of the meat. Once the requirements for tag validation, reporting and biological sampling have been met in accordance with 4VAC15-90-510, evidence of sex is no longer required.
- B. Any elk found in the possession of any person without a validated (notched) license tag or documentation that the elk has been reported in accordance with 4VAC15-90-510, shall be forfeited to the Commonwealth to be disposed of as provided by law.
- C. It is unlawful for a person to fail to reasonably attempt to dress, care for, and remove from the field the edible portions of any harvested elk, at a minimum the meat from front shoulders, back quarters, and back-straps. Violation of this subsection shall constitute wanton waste for the purposes of section § 29.1-553.1 of the Code of Virginia.
- D. It shall be unlawful to hunt elk with dogs. This subsection shall not prohibit the use of tracking dogs, which may be used in accordance with § 29.1-516.1 of the Code of Virginia.
- E. It shall be unlawful to drive elk from any area, including man-drives, pushing with vehicles, or any other human action that is intended to cause animals to move into a harvestable situation.
- F. The special elk hunting license shall be valid on all private land, with written permission from the landowner, within the Elk Management Zone. The special elk hunting license shall also be valid on public lands as designated on an individual's special elk hunting license. This is only applicable to special elk hunting licenses awarded through the random drawing and conservation license programs.
- G. Elk hunters 15 years of age and younger or holders of an apprentice hunting license must be accompanied by and directly supervised by an adult who has a valid Virginia hunting license or is exempt from purchasing a hunting license. Adult hunters accompanying youth or apprentice hunters on a special elk hunt may not carry or discharge weapons.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

This proposal relates to the pursuit of elk by hunters within the Elk Management Zone and the requirements of the hunter after the successful harvest of an elk. The requirement to maintain evidence of sex after an elk is successfully harvested is consistent with other big game species regulations but also includes requirements ensuring the Department has the opportunity to collect biological samples. In accordance with the VA Elk Management Plan, biological sampling of elk is conducted on harvested or dead elk as part of a proactive disease sampling effort. Because of the limited harvest opportunities for elk within the EMZ and the substantial investment in the VA elk restoration, the proposed wanton waste requirements will promote the maximum utilization of a harvested elk. Defining which lands a special elk hunting license is valid on allows the Department the ability to promote equitable portions of public lands to each hunter, while also allowing hunters the autonomy to pursue elk on any private lands they have permission to hunt on. Because elk are a herd animal, prohibiting both the use of dogs and man drives in the hunting of elk will limit disturbance to the elk herd and other elk hunters. Prohibiting the use of dogs in the hunting of elk is also consistent with similar restrictions for deer hunting within the Western portion of the Commonwealth. Sections related to youth or apprentice hunters are consistent with subsequent sections in other big game species regulations.

4VAC15-90-530 (New)

Game: Deer: Special elk hunting license – random drawing license program

Summary:

The proposal establishes and outlines the random drawing process for awarding special elk hunting licenses within the Elk Management Zone.

Proposed language of the amendment:

4VAC15-90-530. Special elk hunting license – random drawing license program

- A. The annual application period to enter the random drawing for a special elk hunting license shall be the February 1 to March 30, both dates inclusive, unless extended by the director. Individuals selected for a special elk hunting license via the random drawing will be notified by May 30 and must be purchased from the department within 30 days of notification.
- B. To enter the random drawing for a special elk hunting license, applicants shall:
 - 1. Complete the application for a special elk hunting license as provided by the department.
 - 2. Pay a nonrefundable application fee.
 - 3. Apply only once for each random drawing.
- C. Nonresidents shall not comprise more than 10%, or one drawn applicant, whichever is greater, of all drawn applicants in any application pool for the random drawing license program.
- D. Applicants who physically reside within the Elk Management Zone shall comprise no less than 10%, or a minimum of one, whichever is greater, of all drawn applicants in any application pool for the random drawing license program.
- E. A special elk hunting license awarded through the Random Drawing License Program shall not be transferable.
- F. An applicant drawn for a special elk hunting license may be rejected if it is determined that the applicant has been convicted of two or more wildlife violations within three years prior to the last date of the application period. In determining the applicants' eligibility, the Director shall take into account the nature and severity of the violations.
- G. The department will award unclaimed special elk hunting licenses to alternates that are drawn during the initial application and draw period in the order that the alternates are drawn.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

The random drawing license program will be the most common means that a special elk hunting license is awarded. This process will provide an opportunity for any individual to draw a special elk hunting license while also prioritizing the opportunity for residents of Virginia and those applicants who reside within the Elk Management Zone. This prioritization of special elk hunting licenses is in accordance with recommendations within the VA Elk Management Plan to balance the benefits that elk provide through hunting opportunities and any potential negative impact from elk within the EMZ. Timelines for random drawing application and awarding of the special elk hunting license will provide sufficient time for an individual to apply and claim their license, if drawn, while also providing enough time for preparation prior to the elk hunting season. The random drawing timeline also provides the opportunity for the Department to award unclaimed special elk hunting licenses to alternates that are drawn during the initial

process. Prohibiting the transfer of a special elk hunting license, awarded through the random drawing license program, is intended to promote and ensure the equitability of the drawing and prevent the potential commercialization of elk in Virginia, which is a guiding principle of the North American Model of Wildlife Management. The proposal that a drawn applicant with a recent and frequent history of wildlife violations may be rejected, will ensure that the limited opportunities that are available to hunt elk within the EMZ are not afforded to those that may not pursue them in a legal and ethical manner.

4VAC15-90-540 (New)

Game: Deer: Special elk hunting license – Landowner License Program

Summary:

The proposal establishes and outlines a program to provide access for elk hunting on private lands within the Elk Management Zone.

Proposed language of the amendment:

4VAC15-90-540. Special elk hunting license – Landowner License Program

- A. Upon receipt of a valid Landowner License Program application from a landowner within the Elk Management Zone, the director or ~~their~~ the director's designee shall verify the application materials and have sole discretion in enrolling the property in the Landowner License Program. Applications must be received or postmarked by July 1 each year to be eligible for the Landowner License Program during that calendar year.
- B. A valid Landowner License Program application shall include:
 - 1. Landowner's name, home address, telephone number, and address of the property to be enrolled in the program.
 - 2. A recorded survey or other legal documentation certifying that the property to be enrolled is \geq greater than or equal to] 50 contiguous acres.
 - 3. ~~[Affidavit that elk hunters on the enrolled property shall not be charged a fee.]~~
 - 3. Original signature of the landowner.
 - 4. Only a single application per license year, per landowner.
- C. Landowners enrolled in the Landowner License Program maintain the right to limit access to certain areas of the property for safety or privacy reasons, provided a minimum of 50 acres are open to elk hunting. Areas of limited access must be outlined in the initial application. Enrollment in the Landowner License Program does not preclude or limit in any way the landowner from allowing other hunting or hunters on the property.
- D. The department shall determine and make available to the public a program guidance document outlining how landowners enrolled in the Landowner License Program shall accrue points toward a special elk hunting license, the number of points necessary to be awarded such license, and other program requirements. The program guidance document will be published annually prior to June 1.
- E. Landowners who accrue the necessary number of points, as defined in the program guidance document, on an enrolled property may request one either-sex special elk hunting license from the department. A request for a special hunting license must be submitted prior to July 1 in the year the license is to be used. Once a request for a special elk hunting license is made, landowners lose all accrued points. There is no time limit over which a landowner is required to accrue license points. Landowners shall not combine points from separate enrolled properties.
- F. Landowners enrolled in the Landowner License Program shall not subdivide contiguous properties under the same ownership into multiple, smaller parcels for the purposes of this program.
- G. License points cannot be sold or traded. License points are nontransferable if the property changes ownership, except that if the property is inherited from parents, grandparents or children, resident or non-resident, license points may be transferred. The department may request documentation to certify the relationship between seller and purchaser as well as a copy of bill of sale.

- H. Landowners receiving a special elk hunting license shall comply with all of the requirements established in this [administrative regulation section] as well as 4VAC15-90-510, 4VAC15-90-520 and Virginia Code § 29.1-305.01. Landowners that fail to comply with [either regulation this chapter] may forfeit any accrued license points, and may not be eligible to accrue new license points.
- I. A special elk hunting license awarded to the landowner shall only be used on the property enrolled with the department in the Landowner License Program.
- J. A landowner may transfer [or sell] the special elk hunting license to any person eligible to hunt in Virginia. [The special elk hunting license may not be sold.] Transfer of the special elk hunting license must be reported to the department no less than one month prior to the opening day of the elk hunting season during the year in which the special elk hunting license is requested. To report a transfer to the department, the landowner shall provide the department with the hunter's:
 - 1. Name
 - 2. Department customer identification number
 - 3. Address; and
 - 4. Telephone number
- K. [A landowner shall not charge a fee for hunters to hunt elk on properties enrolled in the Landowner License Program except as described in the program guidance document.]
- L. A special elk hunting license transferee may be rejected if it is determined that the transferee has been convicted of two or more wildlife violations, within three years prior to the last date of the application period. In determining the transferees' eligibility, the director shall take into account the nature and severity of the violations.

Staff Final Recommendation - Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed with the following modifications: 1) remove language allowing the sale of a special elk hunting license through the Landowner License Program as the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program requires that the department be in direct control of all funds generated by the sale of licenses, and 2) clarify that a landowner may not charge a fee for hunters to hunt elk on the property except as may be outlined in the program guidance document.

Rationale:

Providing elk hunters with adequate lands to pursue elk will play an important role in the success the special elk hunting license program. The opportunity for landowners to earn points toward a special elk hunting license in exchange for providing access for elk hunting on their property (>50 ac) is a non-traditional path to promote public access and provide elk hunter's additional opportunity. This proposal does not limit the landowner's ability to control access to certain portions of the enrolled property or for uses other than elk hunting. A program guidance document will be published yearly, prior to the enrollment deadline, to describe the criteria for a landowner to enroll and earn points toward a special elk hunting license. Limiting the use of the special elk hunting license, earned by the landowner through this program, to the enrolled property balances the opportunity for the landowner to hunt elk and the Department's ability to follow the biological harvest strategy that is established within the EMZ. Allowing the transfer of the special elk hunting license through this program varies from other elk license programs because the landowner is earning the license in exchange for allowing public access for elk hunting, rather than it being awarded through a random drawing. The proposal that a license transferee with a recent and frequent history of wildlife violations may be rejected, will ensure that the limited

opportunities that are available to hunt elk within the EMZ are not afforded to those that may not pursue them in a legal and ethical manner.

4VAC15-90-550 (New)
Game: Deer: Special elk hunting license – Conservation License Program

Summary:

The proposal establishes and outlines a program to award a wildlife conservation organization with a reserved special elk hunting license for the Elk Management Zone.

Proposed language of the amendment:

4VAC15-90-550. Special elk hunting license – Conservation License Program

- A. For the purposes of this section, the following words or terms shall have the following meanings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

“Individual, cooperators, or wildlife conservation organizations” mean those people of entities whose mission is to promote and ensure the conservation of Virginia’s wildlife resources or to promote opportunities for hunting, fishing, trapping, boating, or other wildlife-related recreation in Virginia.

“Proceeds” means the amount of money received by the cooperator or organization from the transfer of a [reserved] special elk hunting license minus all expenses [, including the fees associated with the license,] and administrative costs directly attributable to the transfer of the license or the implementation of the defined project.

- B. Upon receipt of a valid Conservation License Program application from an officer or other designated official representative of any individual, cooperator, or wildlife conservation organization, the director or ~~their~~ the director’s] designee shall verify the application materials and may select a program awardee annually. Applications must be received or postmarked no later than April 1 to be eligible for the Conservation License Program during that calendar year.

1. ~~[For the purposes of this section, “individual, cooperators, or wildlife conservation organizations” means those people or entities whose mission is to promote and ensure the conservation of Virginia’s wildlife resources and/or to promote opportunities for hunting, fishing, trapping, boating or other wildlife-related recreation within Virginia.]~~

- C. A valid Conservation License Program application shall include:

1. Cooperator or organization name, name of the individual designated to submit and receive official correspondence, address for such correspondence, and a telephone number.
2. Cooperator or organization mission statement.
3. A written application describing:
 - a. Cooperator or organization role in wildlife conservation in Virginia.
 - b. Cooperator or organization purpose and intent for requesting [a reserved] special elk hunting license through the Conservation License Program.
 - c. Cooperator or organization proposal for method of generating funds from transfer of the [reserved] special elk hunting license to an eligible individual.
 - d. Cooperator or organization strategy to direct proceeds received from the transfer of the [reserved] special elk hunting license and any matching funding toward wildlife conservation or wildlife-related recreation in Virginia’s Elk Management Zone.

- D. The director shall establish a Conservation License Program Committee to review program applications and submit a recommendation to the director to ~~award~~ reserve] no more than one special elk hunting license ~~to~~ for] a cooperator or organization whose application is deemed to provide the greatest benefit to wildlife conservation and wildlife-related recreation in Virginia per

license year. This committee shall be composed of a minimum of three individuals and make a recommendation to the director by May 1 each year.

- E. A cooperator or organization receiving a [reserved] special elk hunting license must direct all proceeds from the transfer of such [license reservation], toward a project to improve and enhance wildlife habitat, wildlife populations, or wildlife-related recreation within the Elk Management Zone. The proposed strategy and requirements will be outlined in a memorandum of agreement between the department and the cooperator or organization.
1. [For the purpose of this section “proceeds” means the amount of money received by the cooperator or organization from the transfer of a special elk hunting license minus all expenses and administrative costs directly attributable to the transfer of the permit or the implementation of the defined project.]
- F. A cooperator or organization may transfer the [reserved] special elk hunting license to any person eligible to hunt in Virginia. The generation of funds from the transfer of the [reserved] special elk hunting license may only be conducted through a raffle.
- G. Transfer of the [reserved] special elk hunting license must be reported to the department no less than one month prior to the opening day of the elk hunting season during which the special elk hunting license is valid. To report a transfer to the department, the cooperator or organization shall provide the department with the hunter's:
1. Name
 2. Department customer identification number
 3. Address; and
 4. Telephone number
- H. A special elk hunting license transferee may be rejected if it is determined that the transferee has been convicted of two or more wildlife violations, within three years prior to the last date of the application period. In determining the transferees’ eligibility, the director shall take into account the nature and severity of the violations.
- I. A cooperator or organization [awarded a who receives a reserved] special elk hunting license shall submit an annual report to the department regarding any proceeds received from the transfer of the [reserved] license and an accounting of how those funds were directed toward wildlife conservation or wildlife-related recreation in the Elk Management Zone.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed with the following modification: indicate that the Conservation License Program “reserves” a special elk hunting license which the individual, cooperator, or wildlife conservation organization may transfer to an eligible hunter. This modified language will better align the Department’s program with the requirements of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration program.

Rationale:

With the passage of § 29.1-305.01, authority was given to the Board of Wildlife Resources to establish guidelines permitting the transfer of special elk licenses to individuals, cooperators who assist in meeting agency hunting objectives, or wildlife conservation organizations whose mission is to ensure the conservation of Virginia's wildlife resources. This proposal exercises that authority by creating an opportunity for the Department to promote wildlife management efforts and projects within the EMZ by

allowing a partner to generate funds from the transfer of a special elk hunting license. That cooperator or organization must demonstrate a history and ability to effectively implement wildlife management and outline a plan for generating the funding, designing a wildlife management project, and executing that project within the EMZ.

The method of fund raising, through the transfer of the special elk hunting license by the cooperator or conservation organization, is limited to a raffle in an effort to generate funds for wildlife management while still providing an equitable chance for any eligible person to receive the special elk hunting license. The creation of a review committee would promote a versatile and comprehensive review of the applications in order to make a recommendation to the director. A memorandum of agreement (MOA) between the Department and the cooperator or conservation organization will create a legal document that outlines project details and program requirements. This MOA, along with the required annual report, will create cooperation and accountability and ensure the projects funded through this program are having the most benefit possible to wildlife management efforts in the EMZ. The proposal that a license transferee with a recent and frequent history of wildlife violations may be rejected, will ensure that the limited opportunities that are available to hunt elk within the EMZ are not afforded to those that may not pursue them in a legal and ethical manner.

4VAC15-270-10
Game: Firearms: Size rifles for hunting bear and deer.

Summary:

The proposal is to include elk in the list of species which must be hunted with rifles not less than 23 caliber and removes the 23 caliber restriction for humanely dispatching a bear, elk, or deer in circumstances where a smaller caliber weapon may be more appropriate.

Proposed Language of Amendment:

4VAC15-270-10. Size rifles for hunting bear, elk, and deer.

It shall be unlawful to use a rifle of a caliber less than 23 for the hunting ~~or killing~~ of bear, elk, and deer.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

With the passage of § 29.1-305.01 and the associated creation of a Special Elk Hunting License within the Elk Management Zone (EMZ), separate regulations needed to be established for elk hunting outside and within the EMZ. As a result of that separation, certain regulations that previously applied to both deer and elk are no longer applicable to elk. Additional language is needed to include elk in those regulations. Removing the word “kill” from this regulation will allow the public and law enforcement personnel to humanely dispatch severely injured or diseased animals with weapons less than 23 caliber. It will also provide clarity that such weapons are lawful for management activities authorized by the Department.

Chronic Wasting Disease Regulations

4VAC15-90-10
Game: Deer: Open season; generally.

Summary:

The proposal is to create (i) both an early September antlerless only firearms deer season and a late (January through March) antlerless only firearms deer season countywide in Clarke County and on non-national forest lands in Frederick, Shenandoah, and Warren counties, (ii) an early September antlerless only firearms deer season on private lands in Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison, Orange, and Rappahannock counties, and (iii) an early September antlerless only firearms deer season and a late (January through March) antlerless only firearms deer season in designated disease focus zones in Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison, Orange, Page, and Rappahannock counties.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-90-10. Open season; generally.

- A. It shall be lawful to hunt deer in the following localities, including the cities and towns therein, during the following seasons, all dates inclusive.

Locality	Season
Accomack County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Albemarle County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Alleghany County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Amelia County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Amherst County (west of Business U.S. 29 from the James River to its intersection with U.S. 29 just south of the Town of Amherst continuing north on U.S. 29 to the Tye River, except on national forest lands)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 28 consecutive days following
Amherst County (national forest lands)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Amherst County (east of Business U.S. 29, as defined above)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Appomattox County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Arlington County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Arlington County (antlerless deer only)	First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March
Augusta County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Bath County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Bedford County (except on national forest lands)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 28 consecutive days following
Bedford County (national forest lands)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Bland County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Botetourt County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following

Brunswick County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Buchanan County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Buckingham County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Campbell County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Caroline County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Carroll County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Charles City County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Charlotte County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Chesapeake (City of)	October 1 through November 30
Chesterfield County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Clarke County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
<u>Clarke County (antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March</u>
Craig County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Culpeper County (except Chester F. Phelps Wildlife Management Area)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Culpeper County (Chester F. Phelps Wildlife Management Area)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
<u>Culpeper County (private lands and antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October</u>
<u>Culpeper County (disease focus areas zones defined by the Department, antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March</u>
Cumberland County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Dickenson County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following

Dinwiddie County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Essex County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Fairfax County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Fairfax County (antlerless deer only)	First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March
Fauquier County (except Chester F. Phelps Wildlife Management Area)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Fauquier County (Chester F. Phelps Wildlife Management Area)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
<u>Fauquier County (private lands and antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October</u>
<u>Fauquier County (disease focus [areas zones] defined by the Department, antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March</u>
Floyd County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 28 consecutive days following
Fluvanna County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Franklin County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 28 consecutive days following
Frederick County (non-national forest lands)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Frederick County (national forest lands)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
<u>Frederick County (non-national-forest lands antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March</u>
Giles County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Gloucester County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Goochland County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Grayson County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following

Greene County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Greensville County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Halifax County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Hanover County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Henrico County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Henry County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 28 consecutive days following
Highland County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Isle of Wight County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
James City County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
King and Queen County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
King George County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
King William County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Lancaster County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Lee County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Loudoun County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Loudoun County (antlerless deer only)	First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March
Louisa County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Lunenburg County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Madison County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January

<u>Madison County (private lands and antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October</u>
<u>Madison County (disease focus [areas zones] defined by the Department, antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March</u>
Mathews County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Mecklenburg County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Middlesex County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Montgomery County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Nelson County (west of Route 151, except on national forest lands)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 28 consecutive days following
Nelson County (national forest lands)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Nelson County (east of Route 151)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
New Kent County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Northampton County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Northumberland County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Nottoway County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Orange County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
<u>Orange County (private lands and antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October</u>
<u>Orange County (disease focus [areas zones] defined by the Department, antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March</u>
Page County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following

<u>Page County (disease focus [areas zones] defined by the Department, antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March</u>
Patrick County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 28 consecutive days following
Pittsylvania County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Powhatan County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Prince Edward County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Prince George County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Prince William County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Prince William County (antlerless deer only)	First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March
Pulaski County (except on New River Unit of the Radford Army Ammunition Plant adjacent to the Town of Dublin)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Pulaski County (New River Unit of the Radford Army Ammunition Plant adjacent to the Town of Dublin)	Saturday prior to the second Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Rappahannock County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
<u>Rappahannock County (private lands and antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October</u>
<u>Rappahannock County (disease focus [areas zones] defined by the Department, antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March</u>
Richmond County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Roanoke County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Rockbridge County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following

Rockingham County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Russell County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Scott County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Shenandoah County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
<u>Shenandoah County (non-national forest lands antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March</u>
Smyth County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Southampton County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Spotsylvania County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Stafford County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Suffolk (City of) (east of Dismal Swamp Line)	October 1 through November 30
Suffolk (City of) (west of Dismal Swamp Line)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Surry County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Sussex County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Tazewell County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Virginia Beach (City of)	October 1 through November 30
Warren County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
<u>Warren (non-national forest lands antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March</u>
Washington County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Westmoreland County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January

Wise County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Wythe County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
York County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January

B. Except as provided in subsection A of this section, east of the Blue Ridge Mountains deer may be hunted from the Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive, within the incorporated limits of any city or town that allows deer hunting.

C. Except as provided in subsection A of this section, west of the Blue Ridge Mountains deer may be hunted from the Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following within the incorporated limits of any city or town that allows deer hunting.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed with the following modification: changing the term “disease focus area” to “disease focus zone”. This modification will help reduce any potential public confusion which could between the terms “disease focus area” and “Disease Management Area” within the Department Chronic Wasting Disease program.

Rationale:

Antlerless only deer seasons in CWD management areas. Expanded antlerless harvest in specific disease management area (DMA) counties and disease focus zones (DFZ) within specified DMA counties is a management strategy aimed at reducing the spread and transmission of chronic wasting disease (CWD) in Virginia. The Department detected the first case of CWD in 2009 in Frederick County and has closely monitored both prevalence trends and the spread of the disease. Since hunting is recognized as a critical tool for CWD management, and CWD monitoring data suggests a recent amplified spread of the disease to new areas of northwest Virginia, expanded antlerless harvest throughout the DMAs is prudent.

CWD monitoring data suggests that the disease is firmly established in Frederick and Shenandoah counties. In recent years, CWD has also been detected in Clarke and Warren counties, and both counties are at an elevated risk for additional disease spread and establishment. Therefore, additional antlerless deer hunting opportunities are appropriate in all four counties. In five additional counties, a less aggressive expansion of antlerless harvest is being proposed. While CWD surveillance efforts have confirmed the disease within the counties of Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison, and Rappahannock, and in multiple counties adjacent to Orange County, surveillance data suggests that the disease was more recently introduced and is not yet firmly established in these areas.

The private land deer populations in Madison and Rappahannock counties is currently at the deer population management objective outlined in the Department’s deer management plan. Per the deer plan, staff will engage the stakeholder advisory committee who developed the plan to reduce the deer population objectives in these two counties and possibly other disease management area counties in the near future.

Proposals relative to DFZ’s will enable the Department to target additional harvest management approaches around new CWD detections as they are discovered. DFZs are defined as a local expansion of antlerless hunting opportunities in a focused area around an outlier CWD detection, which is located more than 5 miles from the nearest detection. The goals of expanded antlerless hunting opportunities in a DFZ

are to slow disease transmission in the immediate vicinity of a detection and to increase testing opportunities for deer harvested in close vicinity to an outlier CWD detection.

4VAC15-90-89
Game: Deer: Earn a buck (EAB)

Summary:

The proposal is to (i) initiate EAB on private lands in Accomack, Amherst (west of Route 29), Carroll, Greene, Madison, Orange, Rockingham (east of Routes 613 and 731), Stafford, and Wythe counties, (ii) change the EAB requirement in Clarke, Frederick, and Warren counties from a two to one EAB requirement to a one to one EAB requirement, (iii) change the EAB requirement in James City and York counties from a one to one EAB requirement to a two to one EAB requirement, and (iv) reformat the regulation text.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-90-89. Earn a buck (EAB).

A. For the purposes of this section, the term "license year" [~~defines~~ means] the period between July 1 and June 30 of the following year.

~~Albemarle County on private lands. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer on private lands in Albemarle County prior to taking at least one antlerless deer on private lands in Albemarle County, and it shall be unlawful to take a third antlered deer on private lands in Albemarle County prior to taking at least two antlerless deer on private lands in Albemarle County.~~

~~Arlington County. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer in Arlington County prior to taking at least two antlerless deer in Arlington County, and it shall be unlawful to take a third antlered deer in Arlington County prior to taking at least three antlerless deer in Arlington County.~~

~~Bedford County on private lands. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer on private lands in Bedford County prior to taking at least one antlerless deer on private lands in Bedford County, and it shall be unlawful to take a third antlered deer on private lands in Bedford County prior to taking at least two antlerless deer on private lands in Bedford County.~~

~~Clarke County on private lands. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer on private lands in Clarke County prior to taking at least two antlerless deer on private lands in Clarke County.~~

~~Culpeper County on private lands. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer on private lands in Culpeper County prior to taking at least one antlerless deer on private lands in Culpeper County, and it shall be unlawful to take a third antlered deer on private lands in Culpeper County prior to taking at least two antlerless deer on private lands in Culpeper County.~~

~~Fairfax County. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer in Fairfax County prior to taking at least two antlerless deer in Fairfax County, and it shall be unlawful to take a third antlered deer in Fairfax County prior to taking at least three antlerless deer in Fairfax County.~~

~~Fauquier County on private lands. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer on private lands in Fauquier County prior to taking at least one antlerless deer on private lands in Fauquier County, and it shall be unlawful to take a third antlered deer on private lands in Fauquier County prior to taking at least two antlerless deer on private lands in Fauquier County.~~

~~Floyd County on private lands. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer on private lands in Floyd County prior to taking at least one antlerless deer on private lands in Floyd County.~~

~~Franklin County on private lands. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer on private lands in Franklin County prior to taking at least one antlerless deer on private lands in Franklin County, and it shall be unlawful to take a third antlered deer on private lands in Franklin County prior to taking at least two antlerless deer on private lands in Franklin County.~~

~~Frederick County on private lands. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer on private lands in Frederick County prior to taking at least two antlerless deer on private lands in Frederick County.~~

~~Grayson County on private lands. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer on private lands in Grayson County prior to taking at least one antlerless deer on private lands in Grayson County.~~

~~Hanover County on private lands. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer on private lands in Hanover County prior to taking at least one antlerless deer on private lands in Hanover County, and it shall be unlawful to take a third antlered deer on private lands in Hanover County prior to taking at least two antlerless deer on private lands in Hanover County.~~

~~Henrico County on private lands. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer on private lands in Henrico County prior to taking at least one antlerless deer on private lands in Henrico County, and it shall be unlawful to take a third antlered deer on private lands in Henrico County prior to taking at least two antlerless deer on private lands in Henrico County.~~

~~James City County on private lands. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer on private lands in James City County prior to taking at least one antlerless deer on private lands in James City County, and it shall be unlawful to take a third antlered deer on private lands in James City County prior to taking at least two antlerless deer on private lands in James City County.~~

~~Loudoun County. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer in Loudoun County prior to taking at least two antlerless deer in Loudoun County, and it shall be unlawful to take a third antlered deer in Loudoun County prior to taking at least three antlerless deer in Loudoun County.~~

~~Montgomery County on private lands. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer on private lands in Montgomery County prior to taking at least one antlerless deer on private lands in Montgomery County.~~

~~Prince George County on private lands. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer on private lands in Prince George County prior to taking at least one antlerless deer on private lands in Prince George County, and it shall be unlawful to take a third antlered deer on private lands in Prince George County prior to taking at least two antlerless deer on private lands in Prince George County.~~

~~Prince William County except on Department of Defense lands. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer in Prince William County (except on Department of Defense lands) prior to taking at least two antlerless deer in Prince William County (except on Department of Defense lands), and it shall be unlawful to take a third antlered deer in Prince William County (except on Department of Defense lands) prior to taking at least three antlerless deer in Prince William County (except on Department of Defense lands).~~

~~Pulaski County on private lands. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer on private lands in Pulaski County prior to taking at least one antlerless deer on private lands in Pulaski County.~~

~~Rappahannock County. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer in Rappahannock County prior to taking at least one antlerless deer in Rappahannock County, and it shall be unlawful to take a third antlered deer in Rappahannock County prior to taking at least two antlerless deer in Rappahannock County.~~

~~Roanoke County on private lands. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer on private lands in Roanoke County prior to taking at least one antlerless deer on private lands in Roanoke County.~~

~~Shenandoah County on private lands. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer on private lands in Shenandoah County prior to taking at least one antlerless deer on private lands in Shenandoah County.~~

~~Warren County on private lands. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer on private lands in Warren County prior to taking at least two antlerless deer on private lands in Warren County.~~

~~York County on private lands. During a license year, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer on private lands in York County prior to taking at least one antlerless deer on private lands in York County, and it shall be unlawful to take a third antlered deer on private lands in York County prior to taking at least two antlerless deer on private lands in York County.~~

~~Cities and towns. During a license year in any town or city (except Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach) east of the Blue Ridge Mountains, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer prior to taking at least one antlerless deer in that town or city, and it shall be unlawful to take a third antlered deer prior to taking at least two antlerless deer in that town or city. During a license year in any town or city west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, it shall be unlawful to take a second antlered deer prior to taking at least one antlerless deer in that town or city.~~

- B. Within a license year and within in each individual county listed in [this] subsection [(A)(1)], [you a hunter] must have taken at least one antlerless deer on private lands in that county before taking a second antlered deer on private lands in that county. In those counties listed in [this] subsection [(A)(1)] east of the Blue Ridge Mountains, [you a hunter] must have taken at least two antlerless deer on private lands in that county before taking a third antlered deer on private lands in that county.

[The counties subject to the provisions of this subsection are] Accomack, Albemarle, Amherst (west of Route 29), Bedford, Carroll, Clarke, Culpeper, Fauquier, Floyd, Franklin, Frederick, Grayson, Greene, Hanover, Henrico, Madison, Montgomery, Orange, Prince George, Pulaski, Rappahannock, Roanoke, Rockingham (east of Routes 613 and 731), Shenandoah, Stafford, Warren, and Wythe [counties].

- C. Within a license year and within in each individual county listed in [this] subsection [(B)(1)], [you a hunter] must have taken at least two antlerless deer on private lands in that county before taking a second antlered deer on private lands in that county. [You A hunter] also must have taken at least three antlerless deer on private lands in that county before taking a third antlered deer on private lands in that county.

[The counties subject to the provisions of this subsection are] James City and York [counties].

- D. Within a license year and within in each individual county listed in [this] subsection [(C)(1)], [you a hunter] must have taken at least two antlerless deer in that county before taking a second

antlered deer in that county. [You A hunter] must also have taken at least three antlerless deer in that county before taking a third antlered deer in that county.

[The counties subject to the provisions of this subsection are] Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William (except on Department of Defense lands) [counties].

- E. Within a license year and within any city or town, except the cities of Chesapeake, Suffolk [~~east of the Dismal Swamp line~~], and Virginia Beach [you a hunter] must have taken at least one antlerless deer in that city or town before taking a second antlered deer in that city or town. In those cities and towns east of the Blue Ridge Mountains, [you a hunter] must have taken at least two antlerless deer in that city or town before taking a third antlered deer in that city or town.
- F. The [EAB Earn A Buck Program] does not apply to the Cities of Chesapeake, Suffolk [~~east of the Dismal Swamp line~~], and Virginia Beach.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed with the following modification: remove the phrase “(east of the Dismal Swamp line)” as it refers to the City of Suffolk in subsections E and F. Subsections E and F should refer to the entirety of the City of Suffolk.

Rationale:

EAB on private lands in Accomack, Amherst (west of Route 29), Carroll, Greene, Orange, Rockingham (east of Routes 613 and 731), Stafford, and Wythe counties. The private land deer populations in these eight counties are currently above their desired deer population management objective bracket in the Department’s deer management plan. All deer seasons (archery, muzzleloading, and firearms) are currently full season either-sex deer hunting on private lands in all these counties. The next step to increase the antlerless deer kill in these counties is to initiate EAB. The addition of EAB should assist in bringing these deer populations back down to their desired level(s).

EAB on private lands in Madison County. The private land deer population index for Madison County is currently within the desired deer population management objective bracket. However, Madison County was added to a new CWD disease management area in fall 2019, and in fall 2020, CWD was detected in Madison County. Additionally, CWD has been found in multiple neighboring counties. Per the deer plan, staff will engage the stakeholder advisory committee who developed the plan to reduce the deer population objectives in this county and possibly other disease management area counties in the near future.

Change the EAB requirement in Clarke, Frederick, and Warren counties. The proposal will reduce the EAB requirement in these three counties from a two to one EAB requirement to a one to one EAB requirement. This will match them up with Shenandoah County, creating a consistent EAB rule on private lands in these four counties. All four of these counties are in a CWD management area and, starting in fall 2021, they are proposed to have both an early September and a late January through March antlerless only firearms deer season. These additional antlerless seasons should more than compensate for scaling back EAB and will provide a more balanced approach to antlered and antlerless harvest, which is an important consideration for CWD management.

Change the EAB requirement in James City and York counties. The proposal will increase the EAB requirement in these two counties from a one to one EAB requirement up to a two to one EAB requirement. The private land deer populations in these two counties are currently above their desired deer population management objective bracket in the Department’s deer management plan. The addition of EAB should assist in bringing these deer populations back down to their desired level(s).

Format. Changes in format made in this version do not change the meaning of the regulation but make it more intuitive, readable, and easier to amend as needed in the future.

4VAC15-90-260

Game: Deer: Hunting with dogs prohibited in certain counties and areas.

Summary:

This proposal will more explicitly define current time restrictions on the use of dogs for hunting deer to enable the extension of deer firearms (open) seasons for disease and population management purposes. The proposal will make clear that the hunting of deer with dogs during any early or late antlerless only firearms deer season is prohibited.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-90-260. Hunting with dogs prohibited in certain counties and areas.

A. Generally. It shall be unlawful to hunt deer with dogs in the counties of Amherst (west of Business U.S. 29 from the James River to its intersection with U.S. 29 just south of the Town of Amherst continuing north on U.S. 29 to the Tye River), Bedford, Campbell (west of Norfolk Southern Railroad, and in the City of Lynchburg), Fairfax, Franklin, Henry, Loudoun, Nelson (west of Route 151), Northampton, Patrick and Pittsylvania (west of Norfolk Southern Railroad); and on the Amelia, Chester F. Phelps, G. Richard Thompson and Pettigrew Wildlife Management Areas, except that tracking dogs as defined in § [29.1-516.1](#) of the Code of Virginia may be used.

B. Special provision for Greene and Madison counties. It shall be unlawful to hunt deer with dogs ~~during the first 14 days on the Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 13 consecutive days following~~ in the counties of Greene and Madison, except that tracking dogs as defined in § [29.1-516.1](#) of the Code of Virginia may be used.

~~C. It shall be unlawful to hunt deer with dogs in any county or city during an open deer season(s) for antlerless deer only as defined in 4VAC15-90-10.~~

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

This proposal will maintain opportunities for hunting deer with dogs where and when they currently exist, while allowing extension of seasons for deer disease and population management. To address Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) management needs, the Department is proposing that an early antlerless only firearms deer season be established on private lands in Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison, Orange, and Rappahannock counties. This proposal will clarify that hunting deer with dogs is not allowed during this season. In Greene and Madison counties, the proposal will tie the 14 consecutive days when hunting deer with dogs is prohibited to the opening day of the traditional firearms deer season.

4VAC15-50-110

Game: Bear: Use of dogs in hunting bear.

Summary:

This proposal will more explicitly define current time restrictions on the use of dogs for hunting bears to enable the extension of deer firearms (open) seasons for disease and population management purposes in certain areas of Virginia.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-50-110. Use of dogs in hunting bear.

A. It shall be unlawful to use dogs for the hunting of bear ~~on the Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 15 consecutive days following during the open season for hunting deer~~ in the counties west of the Blue Ridge Mountains and ~~during the first 16 days of the deer open season~~ in the Counties of Amherst (west of Business U.S. 29 from the James River to its intersection with U.S. 29 just south of the town of Amherst continuing north on U.S. 29 to the Tye River), Bedford, and Nelson (west of Route 151) and within the boundaries of the national forests, except that tracking dogs as described in § [29.1-516.1](#) of the Code of Virginia may be used.

B. It shall be unlawful to use dogs for the hunting of bear ~~on the Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 13 consecutive days following during the first 14 days of the open season for hunting deer~~ in the Counties of Greene and Madison, except that tracking dogs as described in § [29.1-516.1](#) of the Code of Virginia may be used.

C. It shall be unlawful to use dogs for the hunting of bear during the open season prescribed in [4VAC15-50-11](#) in the Counties of Campbell (west of Norfolk Southern Railroad), Carroll (east of the New River), Fairfax, Floyd, Franklin, Grayson (east of the New River), Henry, Loudoun, Montgomery (south of Interstate 81), Patrick, Pittsylvania (west of Norfolk Southern Railroad), Pulaski (south of Interstate 81), Roanoke (south of Interstate 81), and Wythe (southeast of the New River or that part bounded by Route 21 on the west, Interstate 81 on the north, the county line on the east, the New River on the southeast, and Cripple Creek on the south); in the City of Lynchburg; and on Amelia, Chester F. Phelps, G. Richard Thompson, and Pettigrew Wildlife Management Areas, except that tracking dogs as described in § [29.1-516.1](#) of the Code of Virginia may be used.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

This proposal enables extension of deer firearms seasons without having to reduce bear chase or hound hunting opportunities where and when they currently exist. The Department currently needs to extend deer firearms seasons (open seasons) to address chronic wasting disease (CWD) management in northwestern Virginia; in the future, extensions of deer firearms seasons may be needed for population management purposes in certain other western counties. Without the proposed changes to this regulation, the Department would have to reduce opportunities to hunt bears with dogs in order to extend the deer firearms seasons in these areas. For example, the Department is currently proposing to add early antlerless firearms deer season (September) in Clarke, Shenandoah, Frederick, and Warren counties to address CWD. Dogs can be used to hunt bears in these counties during the 3-day early bear firearms season (late September). The current regulation language would prohibit these bear and deer hunting opportunities from running concurrently. Experience east of the Blue Ridge Mountains suggests that conflicts between bear hunters and deer hunters will be minimal as long as the first two weeks of the traditional deer firearms season in November excludes the hunting of bears with dogs.

4VAC15-90-293

Game: Deer: Unauthorized cervid parts, excretions, and carcass importation, movement, possession, and use.

Summary:

The proposal is to (i) add “cleaned jaw bones” to the list of parts permitted to be imported and possessed, (ii) enable the department to allow transport of whole deer carcasses and all parts from one disease management area (DMA) to another, (iii) allow transport of whole deer carcasses and all carcass parts out of a DMA directly to an authorized location in a different state, (iv) and enable the department to restrict transport of whole deer carcasses and all parts between portions of a DMA

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-90-293. Unauthorized cervid parts, excretions, and carcass importation, movement, possession, and use.

A. The following words or terms, when used in 4VAC15-40-285, this section, and 4VAC15-90-294, shall have the following meanings unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

"Cervid" means any member of the deer family Cervidae, including white-tailed deer, fallow deer, sika deer, elk, and reindeer.

"Import" means to transport a carcass or carcass parts, other than those outlined in subsection B of this section, into the Commonwealth in such a manner that the carcass or carcass parts are removed from their place of storage within a vehicle or other conveyance and placed or deposited within the Commonwealth. Deer harvested on properties that span the Commonwealth's boundary with an adjoining state shall not be considered imported.

B. No person shall import or possess any carcass or part of a carcass of any member of the family Cervidae (deer) originating outside of the Commonwealth, except that the following carcass parts may be imported and possessed:

1. Boned-out meat;
2. Quarters or other portions of meat with no part of the spinal column or skull attached;
3. Hides or capes with no skull attached;
4. Clean (no meat or tissue attached) skulls or skull plates with or without antlers attached;
5. Clean (no meat or tissue attached) lower jaw bones;
56. Antlers (with no meat or tissue attached);
67. Upper canine teeth (buglers, whistlers, or ivories); and
78. Finished taxidermy products.

A legible label shall be affixed to packages or containers containing the allowed carcass parts bearing the following information: the species of animal, the state or province from where the animal originated, and the name and address of the person who either killed or possesses the allowed parts in the Commonwealth.

C. Any person who imports into Virginia any deer carcass or parts described in subsection A of this section and is notified that the animal has tested positive for Chronic Wasting Disease must report the test results to the department within 72 hours of receiving the notification. In order to facilitate the proper

disposal of any infected material, the department may take into possession any imported carcass or carcass part of an animal if the animal has tested positive for Chronic Wasting Disease.

D. No person shall transport any carcass or part of a carcass of any cervid out of any area designated by the department as a disease management area, except: ~~that the~~

1. carcass parts enumerated in subsection B of this section, ~~may be transported, and~~
2. carcasses ~~or and~~ parts ~~may be~~ transported ~~directly to to other~~ locations ~~or areas within the Commonwealth~~ designated by the department ~~or to specified locations in other states and provinces where it is legal to import such materials,~~ provided that such carcasses or parts are transported without ~~unnecessary~~ delay and secured within a vehicle ~~or other conveyance~~ during transit.

Provided further that, except for carcass parts enumerated in subsection B of this section, no person shall transport any carcass or part of a carcass of any cervid between administrative units of a disease management area when prohibited by the department. Provisions of this section shall not apply to employees of the department or another government agency, or their designees, working in an official disease investigation or management capacity.

E. No person shall for the purposes of taking or attempting to take, attracting, or scouting any wild animal in Virginia possess or use any substance or material that contains or purports to contain any excretion collected from a cervid, including feces, urine, blood, gland oil, or other bodily fluid.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

(i) Clean jaw bones represent a low risk of CWD transmission and are frequently saved by hunters to determine the age of their harvested deer.

(ii) As Chronic Wasting Disease continues to spread across the landscape, the number of disease management areas (DMAs) is expected to increase. Carcass transport is a recognized disease transmission risk and carcass transport restrictions represent a burden to some hunters. Each DMA presents a certain level of disease transmission risk. Transport of whole carcasses or carcass parts from a moderate-risk disease DMA to another moderate-risk DMA likely represents a high level of hunter satisfaction and a moderate level of disease transmission risk. However, transport of whole carcasses from a high-risk DMA to a lower risk DMA represents the same level of hunter satisfaction but carries a significantly higher level of disease transmission risk. In order to optimize hunter satisfaction and disease transmission risk, unique carcass transport restrictions based upon local disease transmission risk assessments are proposed.

(iii) Some states, such as Maryland, permit the importation of whole deer carcasses from areas known to be affected by chronic wasting disease. The movement of deer carcasses out of a DMA directly to an authorized out-of-state location represents a low CWD transmission risk to white-tailed deer populations in Virginia and facilitates regional cooperation between state agencies.

(iv) As Chronic Wasting Disease continues to spread across the landscape, the number of counties added to DMAs is expected to increase. As is the case with carcass transport between DMAs, it is proposed that carcass transport restrictions within DMAs also be based upon local risk assessments.

Deer & Muzzleloader Hunting Regulations

4VAC15-90-70
Game: Deer: Archery hunting.

Summary:

The proposed regulation amendment corrects a change in the Code of VA which defines a Common Interest Community (CIC) in subsection (G) of the archery deer hunting regulation. The code section changed from § 55.528 to § 54.1-2345.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-90-70. Archery hunting.

A. It shall be lawful to hunt deer during the early special archery season with archery equipment or a slingbow from the first Saturday in October through the Friday prior to the third Monday in November, both dates inclusive.

B. In addition to the season provided in subsection A of this section, it shall be lawful to hunt deer during the late special archery season with archery equipment or a slingbow:

1. From the Sunday following the close of the general firearms season on deer through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive, (i) in all cities, towns, and counties west of the Blue Ridge Mountains (except Clarke County and on non-national forest lands in Frederick County); (ii) in the Counties (including the cities and towns within) of Amherst (west of Business U.S. 29 from the James River to its intersection with U.S. 29 just south of the Town of Amherst continuing north on U.S. 29 to the Tye River), Bedford, Franklin, Henry, Nelson (west of Route 151), and Patrick; (iii) on the Chester F. Phelps Wildlife Management Area; and (iv) on national forest lands in Frederick County.

2. From December 1 through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive, in the Cities of Chesapeake, Suffolk (east of the Dismal Swamp Line), and Virginia Beach.

C. Deer of either sex may be taken full season during the special archery seasons as provided in subsections A and B of this section.

D. It shall be unlawful to carry firearms while hunting with archery equipment during the special archery seasons, except that a muzzleloading gun, as defined in [4VAC15-90-80](#), may be in the possession of a properly licensed muzzleloading gun hunter when and where a special archery deer season overlaps a special muzzleloading deer season.

E. It shall be unlawful to use dogs when hunting with archery equipment during any special archery season, except that tracking dogs as described in § [29.1-516.1](#) of the Code of Virginia may be used.

F. It shall be lawful to hunt antlerless deer during the special urban archery season with archery equipment or a slingbow from the first Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October, both dates inclusive, and from the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March, both dates inclusive, within the incorporated limits of any city or town in the Commonwealth (except on national forest and department-owned lands) and counties with a human population density of 300 persons per square mile or more (except on national forest and department-owned lands), provided that its governing body submits by certified letter to the department prior to April 1, its intent to participate in the special urban archery season. Any city, town, or county no longer participating in this season shall submit by certified letter to the department prior to April 1 notice of its

intent not to participate in the special urban archery season. When consistent with the department's deer management objectives and subject to the director's approval, a participating county may exclude from this season a geographic area by submitting a clear description of such area in a certified letter to the department prior to April 1.

G. It shall be lawful to hunt antlerless deer during the special urban archery season with archery equipment or a slingbow during dates specified in subsection F of this section within the boundaries of any common interest community as defined in § ~~55-528~~ 54.1-2345 of the Code of Virginia provided that (i) the association submits by certified letter to the department prior to July 1 the association's request to participate in the special urban archery season and (ii) the department approves such request.

1. The special urban archery season will in no way supersede any local ordinance, any restriction in the association's governing documents, or the requirement to obtain a landowner's permission to hunt.

2. An association no longer participating in the special urban archery season shall submit notice of the association's intent not to participate in the special urban archery season. The association shall submit the certified letter to the department prior to July 1.

3. At its discretion, the department may suspend or revoke the special urban archery season in any association upon written notice to the association.

For the purposes of this subsection, "association" means the governing board or the authorized agent of the governing board of an association of property owners, condominium unit owners, or proprietary lessees.

H. It shall be lawful to hunt antlerless deer during the special antlerless archery season with archery equipment or a slingbow from the Monday following the last Sunday in March through the last Sunday in April, both dates inclusive, in the Counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William (including the cities and towns within).

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

In 2019 the VA Code section which defines a common interest community (§ 55.528) was repealed and amended to §54.1-2345. This regulation proposal simply updates the archery deer hunting regulation which permits the hunting of deer within CICs (as designated by subsections F and G of this regulation) to include the correct code section for the definition of a CIC.

4VAC15-90-80

Game: Deer: Muzzleloading gun hunting.

Summary:

The proposal is to (i) make both the early and late muzzleloading seasons full season either-sex deer hunting on private lands in Augusta County, (ii) add one either-sex deer hunting day on private lands in Dickenson County during the early muzzleloading deer season, (iii) clarify that four different types of muzzleloading guns are legal during the muzzleloading deer season(s), (iv) change the minimum caliber for muzzleloading rifles from .45 to .40 caliber and (v) address the pending change to the Code of Virginia which would require that only the projectile be loaded from the muzzle for muzzleloading rifles and muzzleloading shotguns.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-90-80. Muzzleloading gun hunting.

A. It shall be lawful to hunt deer during the early special muzzleloading season with muzzleloading guns from the Saturday prior to the first Monday in November through the Friday prior to the third Monday in November, both dates inclusive, in all cities, towns, and counties where deer hunting with a rifle or muzzleloading gun is permitted, except in the Cities of Chesapeake, Suffolk (east of the Dismal Swamp Line), and Virginia Beach.

B. It shall be lawful to hunt deer during the late special muzzleloading season with muzzleloading guns starting 21 consecutive days immediately prior to and on the first Saturday in January:

1. In all cities, towns, and counties west of the Blue Ridge Mountains (except Clarke County and on non-national forest lands in Frederick County);
2. East of the Blue Ridge Mountains in the Counties (including the cities and towns within) of Amherst (west of Business U.S. 29 from the James River to its intersection with U.S. 29 just south of the Town of Amherst continuing north on U.S. 29 to the Tye River), Bedford, Franklin, Henry, Nelson (west of Route 151), and Patrick;
3. On national forest lands in Frederick County; and
4. In the Cities of Chesapeake, Suffolk (east of the Dismal Swamp Line), and Virginia Beach.

C. Deer of either sex may be taken during the entire early special muzzleloading season east of the Blue Ridge Mountains unless otherwise noted in this subsection:

1. Deer of either sex may be taken on the second Saturday only of the early special muzzleloading season on state forest lands, state park lands (except Oconeechee State Park), department-owned lands (except on Merrimac Farm Wildlife Management Area), and Philpott Reservoir.
2. Antlered bucks only—no either-sex deer hunting days during the early special muzzleloading season on national forest lands in Amherst, Bedford, and Nelson Counties.

D. Deer of either sex may be taken on the second Saturday only during the early special muzzleloading season west of the Blue Ridge Mountains unless otherwise noted in this subsection.

1. Deer of either sex may be taken during the entire early special muzzleloading season in Clarke and Floyd Counties and on private lands in Augusta, Botetourt, Carroll, Frederick, Grayson, Montgomery, Pulaski, Roanoke, Rockingham (east of Routes 613 and 731), Scott, Shenandoah, Warren, and Wythe Counties.

2. Antlered bucks only—no either-sex deer hunting days during the early special muzzleloading season in Buchanan, on federal and department-managed lands in Dickenson, Lee, Russell, Tazewell, and Wise Counties and on national forest lands in Alleghany, Bland, Craig, Frederick, Giles, Grayson, Montgomery, Page, Pulaski, Rockingham, Scott, Shenandoah, and Warren Counties, and on national forest and department-owned lands in Augusta, Bath, Botetourt, Carroll, Highland (except Highland Wildlife Management Area), Roanoke, Rockbridge, Smyth, Washington, and Wythe Counties and on Channels State Forest, Grayson Highlands State Park, Hungry Mother State Park, and on private lands west of Routes 613 and 731 in Rockingham County.

E. Deer of either sex may be taken during the last six days of the late special muzzleloading season unless otherwise listed in this subsection:

1. Deer of either sex may be taken full season during the entire late special muzzleloading season in the Counties (including the cities and towns within) of Amherst (west of Business U.S. 29 from the James River to its intersection with U.S. 29 just south of the Town of Amherst continuing north on U.S. 29 to the Tye River, except on national forest lands), Bedford (except on national forest lands), Floyd, Franklin, Henry, Nelson (west of Route 151, except on national forest lands), and Patrick and on private lands in Augusta, Botetourt, Carroll, Grayson, Montgomery, Pulaski, Roanoke, Rockingham (east of Routes 613 and 731), Shenandoah, Warren, and Wythe Counties.

2. Deer of either sex may be taken the last day only during the late special muzzleloading season in Alleghany, Bath, Dickenson, Highland, Lee, Russell, Tazewell, and Wise Counties and on national forest lands in Amherst, Bedford, Bland, Craig, Frederick, Giles, Grayson, Montgomery, Nelson, Page, Pulaski, Rockingham, Scott, Shenandoah, and Warren Counties, and on national forest and department-owned lands in Augusta, Botetourt, Carroll, Roanoke, Rockbridge, Smyth, Washington, and Wythe Counties and on private lands west of Routes 613 and 731 in Rockingham County, Channels State Forest, Grayson Highlands State Park, and Hungry Mother State Park.

3. Antlered bucks only—no either-sex deer hunting days during the late special muzzleloading season in Buchanan County.

F. Deer of either sex may be taken full season during the special muzzleloading seasons within the incorporated limits of any city or town in the Commonwealth that allows deer hunting except in the Cities of Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach.

G. It shall be unlawful to hunt deer with dogs during any special season for hunting with muzzleloading guns, except that tracking dogs as described in § 29.1-516.1 of the Code of Virginia may be used.

H. ~~A muzzleloading gun, for the purpose of this section, means a single shot weapon 45-caliber or larger, firing a single projectile or sabot (with a .35-caliber or larger projectile) where the propellant and projective are loaded from the muzzle of the weapon. include:~~

1. single shot muzzleloading rifles .40 caliber or larger, firing a single projectile or sabot (with a .35 caliber or larger projectile) where the projectile is loaded from the muzzle;

2. muzzleloading shotguns (one or more barrels) not larger than 10 gauge where the projectiles are loaded from the muzzle;
3. muzzleloading pistols (one or more barrels) .45 caliber or larger, firing a single projectile or sabot (with a .35 caliber or larger projectile) per barrel where the propellant and projectile are loaded from the muzzle;
4. muzzleloading revolvers .45 caliber or larger, firing a single projectile or sabot (with a .35 caliber or larger projectile) per cylinder where the propellant and projectile are loaded from the forward end of the cylinder.

I. It shall be unlawful to have in immediate possession any firearm other than a muzzleloading gun while hunting with a muzzleloading gun in a special muzzleloading season.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

Augusta County. The private land deer population in Augusta County is currently above the desired deer population management objective in the Department's deer management plan. The addition of these additional either-sex deer hunting days should assist in bringing the deer population back down to its desired level.

Dickenson County. The private land deer population in Dickenson County is currently at its desired deer population objective in the Department's deer management plan; however, local staff feels that additional either-sex deer hunting opportunities can be provided at this time. Either-sex deer hunting regulations in this county have traditionally been very conservative. Currently, with the exception of the either-sex October archery season, only the last day of the late muzzleloading season is an either-sex deer hunting day (countywide; private lands and public lands). This will increase the number of muzzleloading either-sex deer hunting days on private lands in Dickenson from one to two days.

Defining legal muzzleloading guns. In the past, section H of the muzzleloading gun hunting regulation has been assumed to apply only to muzzleloading rifles. However, the Code of Virginia allows for four different types of muzzleloading guns for deer hunting in Virginia. The proposed changes will clarify what types of muzzleloading guns are legal for deer hunting during the muzzleloading deer season(s) and describe any special restrictions.

Changing the minimum muzzleloading rifle caliber from 45 to 40 caliber. This is a technical change that is not a substantive change, because in fall 2017 the Department changed the single projectile (or sabot) size for muzzleloading rifles down to less than or equal to 35 caliber. This change will accommodate a new 40-caliber muzzleloading rifle that has just come on the market (<https://cva.com/product-line/paramount-htr-rifle/>).

New FireStick Muzzleloading Technology/Rifle. If passed, 2021 House Bill 2298 (<https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?212+sum+HB2298>) changes the legal definition of a muzzleloading rifle and muzzleloading shotgun to note that only the projectile (or projectiles) has to be loaded from the muzzle of the gun. Previously, both the propellant and projectile had to be loaded from the muzzle of the gun. This change will make a new Federal FireStick technology (<https://www.federalpremium.com/firestick.html>) legal for muzzleloading rifles in Virginia (<https://www.traditionsfirearms.com/category/nitrofire-muzzleloader-series>) where the propellant is loaded from the rear of the barrel.

4VAC15-50-71

Game: Bear: Muzzleloading gun hunting.

Summary:

The proposal will clarify the different types of muzzleloading guns that are legal during the muzzleloading bear season, update language consistent with recent technological changes, and address pending changes to the Code of Virginia regarding muzzleloading guns.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-50-71. Muzzleloading gun hunting.

A. It shall be lawful to hunt bears during the special muzzleloading season with muzzleloading guns from the Saturday prior to the second Monday in November through the Friday prior to the third Monday in November, both dates inclusive, except in the Cities of Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach.

B. It shall be unlawful to hunt bear with dogs during any special season for hunting with muzzleloading guns, except that tracking dogs as defined in § 29.1-516.1 of the Code of Virginia may be used.

C. ~~A muzzleloading gun~~, for the purpose of this section, ~~means a single shot weapon 45 caliber or larger, firing a single projectile or sabot (with a .35 caliber or larger projectile) where the propellant and projective are loaded from the muzzle of the weapon. include:~~

1. single shot muzzleloading rifles .40 caliber or larger, firing a single projectile or sabot (with a .35 caliber or larger projectile) where the projectile is loaded from the muzzle;
2. muzzleloading shotguns (one or more barrels) not larger than 10 gauge where the projectiles are loaded from the muzzle;
3. muzzleloading pistols (one or more barrels) .45 caliber or larger, firing a single projectile or sabot (with a .35 caliber or larger projectile) per barrel where the propellant and projectile are loaded from the muzzle;
4. muzzleloading revolvers .45 caliber or larger, firing a single projectile or sabot (with a .35 caliber or larger projectile) per cylinder where the propellant and projectile are loaded from the forward end of the cylinder.

D. It shall be unlawful to have in immediate possession any firearm other than a muzzleloading gun while hunting with a muzzleloading gun in a special muzzleloading season.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

Defining legal muzzleloading guns. In the past, section C of the muzzleloading gun hunting regulation has been assumed to apply only to muzzleloading rifles. However, the Code of Virginia allows four different types of muzzleloading guns for bear hunting in Virginia. The proposed changes will clarify what types of muzzleloading guns are legal for bear hunting during the muzzleloading season(s) and describe any special restrictions.

Changing the minimum muzzleloading rifle caliber from 45 to 40 caliber. This is a technical change, not a substantive change. In fall 2017, the Department reduced the single projectile (or sabot) size for muzzleloading rifles to 35 caliber or greater. This change will accommodate a new 40-caliber

muzzleloading rifle that has just come on the market (<https://cva.com/product-line/paramount-htr-rifle/>). There are no concerns about lethality of this new weapon.

Requiring only the projectile(s) to be loaded from the muzzle. If passed, 2021 House Bill 2298 (<https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?212+sum+HB2298>) would change the legal definition of a muzzleloading rifle and muzzleloading shotgun to note that only the projectile (or projectiles) has to be loaded from the muzzle of the gun. Previously, both the propellant and projectile had to be loaded from the muzzle of the gun. This change will make a new Federal FireStick technology (<https://www.federalpremium.com/firestick.html>), where the propellant is loaded from the rear of the barrel, legal for muzzleloading rifles in Virginia.

4VAC15-90-90

Game: Deer: Bag limit, bonus deer permits and special antlerless provision for youth hunters.

Summary:

The proposal is to (i) establish an unlimited daily bag limit for deer in all the cities and towns in Virginia that allow deer hunting (except in the cities of Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach), (ii) create a uniform statewide deer bag limit of one deer per day on national forest, department-owned, and department-managed lands, and (iii) clarify that national forest lands in Amherst, Bedford, and Nelson are included under the west of the Blue Ridge Mountains bag limit.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-90-90. Bag limit, bonus deer permits and special antlerless provision for youth hunters.

A. The bag limit for deer east of the Blue Ridge Mountains (except on national forest lands in Amherst, Bedford, and Nelson Counties) is two per day, six per license year, three of which must be antlerless unless otherwise noted in this subsection.

1. The daily bag limit for deer is unlimited in the Counties (including the cities and towns within) of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William and in all the cities and towns that allow deer hunting (except in the cities of Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach).

2. Only one deer per day may be taken on national forest, lands in Amherst, Bedford, and Nelson Counties department-owned, and department-managed lands.

3. Only one elk per day may be taken ~~east of the Blue Ridge Mountains.~~

B. The bag limit for deer west of the Blue Ridge Mountains and on national forest lands in Amherst, Bedford, and Nelson is two per day, five per license year, three of which must be antlerless unless otherwise noted in this subsection.

1. The daily bag limit for deer is unlimited in all the cities and towns that allow deer hunting.

12. Only one deer per day may be taken on national forest, department-owned, and department-managed lands ~~west of the Blue Ridge Mountains.~~

23. If a deer hunter kills two antlered bucks in a license year in Alleghany, Augusta, Bath, Highland, or Rockbridge County, at least one of the antlered bucks must have at least four antler points, one inch or longer, on one side of the antlers. This subdivision shall not apply to any county designated by the department within 25 miles of a confirmed detection of Chronic Wasting Disease.

34. Only one elk per day may be taken ~~west of the Blue Ridge Mountains.~~

C. Except as noted in subsection E of this section, antlerless deer may be taken only during designated either-sex deer hunting days during the special archery seasons, special muzzleloading seasons, and the general firearms season.

D. Bonus deer permits shall be valid on private land in counties and cities where deer hunting is permitted (except Buchanan, Dickenson, and Wise Counties) during the special archery seasons, special muzzleloading seasons, and the general firearms season. Bonus deer permits shall be valid on public

lands, including state parks, state forests, national wildlife refuges, military areas, etc., as authorized by the managing agency. Unless otherwise posted or authorized in writing for wildlife management areas by the department, or for national forest lands by the U.S. Forest Service, the use of bonus permits is prohibited on department-owned and national forest lands. Bonus deer permits shall be valid for antlerless deer only. Deer taken on bonus permits shall count against the daily bag limit but are in addition to the seasonal bag limit.

E. Deer hunters 15 years of age and younger, including those exempt from purchasing a hunting license and holders of an apprentice hunting license, when in compliance with all applicable laws and license requirements, may take one antlerless deer per license year on days other than designated either-sex deer hunting days during the special muzzleloading seasons or the general firearms season in all counties.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

Unlimited daily bag limit in cities and towns. Over the past twenty plus years, the Department's deer management staff has taken a proactive and aggressive approach to urban deer management in cities and towns across Virginia. Examples include the establishment of an early and late urban archery deer season(s) which extends deer season to eight months each year and is open to participation for all cities and town in Virginia (except Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach). Forty-seven cities and towns are currently participating. Additionally, the Department has adopted regulations that make the muzzleloading and firearms seasons full season either-sex deer hunting in all cities and towns that allow deer hunting (except Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach). Simply put all cities and towns in Virginia (except the cities of Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach) currently have access to an eight month long deer season in which every deer hunting day is an either-sex deer hunting day. The only regulation currently limiting antlerless deer harvest in these areas is the current two deer per day daily bag limit. Staff recommends that the daily deer bag limit be made unlimited in all cities and towns in Virginia (except Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach).

Public land daily and season antlerless deer bag limits. The Department has documented a significant decline (~60%) in the deer kill on public lands west of the Blue Ridge and east of the Blue Ridge in Amherst, Bedford, and Nelson counties (e.g., National Forest and Department-owned lands)) over the past twenty plus years. To address this decline, the Department has significantly reduced public land either-sex deer hunting opportunities over the last decade or more.

During the last regulation cycle, a uniform statewide private land daily deer bag limit of two deer per day was established. At the same time, a bag limit of one deer per day was adopted for public lands west of the Blue Ridge and national forest lands in Amherst, Bedford, and Nelson.

The deer management staff recommends that a bag limit of one deer per day on public lands should be extended statewide to continue protecting the deer resource from overharvest while at the same time more equitably distributing the available public land deer resource between individual deer hunters and user groups.

National Forest lands in Amherst, Bedford, and Nelson counties. The inserted text corrects an omission in the current bag limit regulation. National forest lands in Amherst, Bedford, and Nelson are exempt from the East of the Blue Ridge Mountains bag limit and should have been added to the West of the Blue Ridge Mountains bag limit to maintain a consistent bag limit on all National Forest lands in Virginia.

4VAC15-90-91**Game: Deer: General firearms season either-sex deer hunting days.****Summary:**

The proposal is to change the general firearms either-sex deer hunting days for the counties/areas shown in the table below:

City/County/WMA	Change	Current	Proposed
Charles City	Increase	31	Full season
Chesterfield	Increase	8	15
Fluvanna	Increase	15	31
Goochland	Increase	31	Full season
King and Queen	Increase	8	15
King William	Increase	8	15
New Kent	Increase	31	Full season
Page (private lands)	Increase	7	Full season
Powhatan (except Powhatan WMA)	Increase	31	Full season
Rockingham (private lands west of Routes 613 and 731)	Increase	1	2
Spotsylvania	Increase	31	Full season
<u>Public Land</u>			
C.F. Phelps	Decrease	2	1
G.R. Thompson WMA	Increase	2	15
Hardware River WMA	Stay the same	15	15
Oakley Forest	Decrease	31	15
Rapidan WMA	Decrease	31	15
White Oak Mountain WMA	Increase	2	4

Proposed language of amendment:**4VAC15-90-91. General firearms season either-sex deer hunting days.**

A. During the general firearms deer season, deer of either sex may be taken within:

Accomack County: full season.

Albemarle County: full season.

Alleghany County: the second Saturday and the last day.

-National forest lands: the last day.

Amelia County: the second and third Saturdays and the last 13 days.

-Amelia WMA: the second and third Saturdays and the last six days.

Amherst County (east of Business U.S. 29 from the James River to its intersection with U.S. 29 just south of the Town of Amherst continuing north on U.S. 29 to the Tye River): the second and third Saturdays and the last 29 days.

Amherst County (west of Business U.S. 29 from the James River to its intersection with U.S. 29 just south of the Town of Amherst continuing north on U.S. 29 to the Tye River): full season.

-National forest lands: the last day.

Appomattox County: the second and third Saturdays and the last six days.

-Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest: the second and third Saturdays.

-Featherfin WMA: the second and third Saturdays and the last 29 days.

Arlington County: full season.

Augusta County: full season.

-National forest and department-owned lands: the last day.

Bath County: the second Saturday and the last day.

-National forest and department-owned lands: the last day.

Bedford County: full season.

-National forest lands: the last day.

Bland County: the second Saturday and the last day.

-National forest lands: the second Saturday and the last day.

Botetourt County: full season.

-National forest and department-owned lands: the last day.

Brunswick County: the second and third Saturdays and the last six days.

Buchanan County: antlered bucks only—no either-sex days. Only deer with antlers above the hairline may be taken.

Buckingham County: the second and third Saturdays and the last six days.

-Horsepen Lake WMA: the second and third Saturdays and the last six days.

-Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest: the second and third Saturdays.

-Featherfin WMA: the second and third Saturdays and the last 29 days.

Campbell County (east of Norfolk Southern Railroad): the second and third Saturdays and the last 29 days.

Campbell County (west of Norfolk Southern Railroad): full season.

Caroline County: the second and third Saturdays and the last six days.

-Mattaponi WMA: the second and third Saturdays and the last six days.

Carroll County: full season.

-National forest and department-owned lands: the second Saturday and the last day.

Charles City County: ~~the second and third Saturdays and the last 29 days~~ full season.

-Chickahominy WMA: antlered bucks only—no either-sex days. Only deer with antlers above the hairline may be taken.

Charlotte County: the second and third Saturdays and the last six days.

Chesapeake (City of): the second and third Saturdays and the last 13 days.

Chesterfield County: the second and third Saturdays and the last ~~six~~ 13 days.

Clarke County: full season.

Craig County: full season.

-National forest and department-owned lands: the second Saturday and the last day.

Culpeper County: full season.

-Chester F. Phelps WMA: the second Saturday ~~and the last day~~.

Cumberland County: the second and third Saturdays and the last 13 days.

-Cumberland State Forest: the second and third Saturdays.

Dickenson County: antlered bucks only—no either-sex days. Only deer with antlers above the hairline may be taken.

Dinwiddie County: the second and third Saturdays and the last six days.

Essex County: the second and third Saturdays and the last six days.

Fairfax County: full season.

Fauquier County: full season.

-G. Richard Thompson WMA: ~~the second Saturday and the last day~~ the second and third Saturdays and the last 13 days.

-Chester F. Phelps WMA: the second Saturday ~~and the last day~~.

Floyd County: full season.

Fluvanna County: second and third Saturdays and the last ~~13~~ 29 days.

-Hardware River WMA: second and third Saturdays and the last 13 days.

Franklin County: full season.

-Philpott Reservoir: the second Saturday and the last six days.

-Turkeycock Mountain WMA: the second Saturday and the last six days.

Frederick County: full season.

-National forest lands: the last day.

Giles County: full season.

-National forest lands: the second Saturday and the last day.

Gloucester County: the second and third Saturdays and the last six days.

Goochland County: ~~the second and third Saturdays and the last 29 days~~ full season.

Grayson County: full season.

-National forest lands and Grayson Highlands State Park: the last day.

Greene County: full season.

Greensville County: the second and third Saturdays and the last six days.

Halifax County: the second and third Saturdays and the last 13 days.

Hanover County: full season.

Henrico County: full season.

Henry County: the second and third Saturdays and the last 13 days.

-Fairystone Farms WMA, Fairystone State Park, and Philpott Reservoir: the second Saturday and the last six days.

-Turkeycock Mountain WMA: the second Saturday and the last six days.

Highland County: the second Saturday and the last day.

-National forest lands: the last day.

-Department-owned lands: the second Saturday and the last day.

Isle of Wight County: full season.

-Ragged Island WMA: antlered bucks only—no either-sex days. Only deer with antlers above the hairline may be taken.

James City County: full season.

King and Queen County: the second and third Saturdays and the last ~~six~~ 13 days.

King George County: the second and third Saturdays and the last 13 days.

King William County: the second and third Saturdays and the last ~~six~~ 13 days.

Lancaster County: the second and third Saturdays and the last 13 days.

Lee County: the second Saturday and the last two days.

-National forest lands: antlered bucks only—no either-sex days. Only deer with antlers above the hairline may be taken.

Loudoun County: full season.

Louisa County: the second and third Saturdays and the last 29 days.

Lunenburg County: the second and third Saturdays and the last six days.

Madison County: full season.

-Rapidan WMA: the second and third Saturdays and the last ~~29~~13 days.

Mathews County: the second and third Saturdays and the last six days.

Mecklenburg County: the second and third Saturdays and the last six days.

-Dick Cross WMA: the second and third Saturdays and the last six days.

Middlesex County: the second and third Saturdays and the last six days.

Montgomery County: full season.

-National forest lands: the second Saturday and the last day.

Nelson County (east of Route 151): the second and third Saturdays and the last 29 days.

-James River WMA: the second Saturday and the last six days.

Nelson County (west of Route 151): full season.

-National forest lands: the last day.

New Kent County: ~~the second and third Saturdays and the last 29 days~~full season.

Northampton County: full season.

Northumberland County: the second and third Saturdays and the last 13 days.

Nottoway County: the second and third Saturdays and the last six days.

Orange County: full season.

Page County: ~~the second Saturday and the last six days~~full season.

-National forest lands: the last day.

Patrick County: the second and third Saturdays and the last 13 days.

-Fairystone Farms WMA, Fairystone State Park, and Philpott Reservoir: the second Saturday and the last six days.

Pittsylvania County (east of Norfolk Southern Railroad): the second and third Saturdays and the last 29 days.

-White Oak Mountain WMA: the second Saturday and the last three days.

Pittsylvania County (west of Norfolk Southern Railroad): full season.

Powhatan County: ~~the second and third Saturdays and the last 29 days~~full season.

-Powhatan WMA: the second and third Saturdays and the last 13 days.

Prince Edward County: the second and third Saturdays and the last six days.

-Briery Creek WMA: the second and third Saturdays and the last six days.

-Featherfin WMA: the second and third Saturdays and the last 29 days.

-Prince Edward State Forest: the second and third Saturdays.

Prince George County: full season.

Prince William County: full season.

Pulaski County: full season.

-National forest lands: the second Saturday and the last day.

Rappahannock County: full season.

Richmond County: the second and third Saturdays and the last 13 days.

Roanoke County: full season.

-National forest and department-owned lands: the last day.

Rockbridge County: the second Saturday and the last two days.

-National forest and department-owned lands: the last day.

Rockingham County: full season.

-National forest lands: the last day.

-Private lands west of Routes 613 and 731: the Second Saturday and the last day.

Russell County: the second Saturday and the last two days.

-Department-owned lands and the Channels State Forest: the last day.

Scott County: the second Saturday and the last six days.

-National forest lands: antlered bucks only—no either-sex days. Only deer with antlers above the hairline may be taken.

Shenandoah County: full season.

-National forest lands: the last day.

Smyth County: full season.

-National forest lands, department-owned lands, and Hungry Mother State Park: the last day.

Southampton County: full season.

Spotsylvania County: ~~the second and third Saturdays and the last 29 days~~ full season.

-Oakley Forest WMA: the second and third Saturdays and the last 13 days.

Stafford County: full season.

Suffolk (east of the Dismal Swamp Line): the second and third Saturdays and the last 13 days.

Suffolk (west of the Dismal Swamp Line): full season.

Surry County: full season.

-Carlisle and Stewart Tracts of the Hog Island WMA: antlered bucks only—no either-sex days. Only deer with antlers above the hairline may be taken.

Sussex County: full season.

-Big Woods WMA (including the Parkers Branch Tract) and Big Woods State Forest: the second and third Saturdays and the last six days.

Tazewell County: the second Saturday and the last two days.

-National forest and department-owned lands: the last day.

Virginia Beach (City of): the second and third Saturdays and the last 13 days.

Warren County: full season.

-National forest lands: the last day.

Washington County: the second Saturday and the last six days.

-National forest lands, department-owned lands, and the Channels State Forest: the last day.

Westmoreland County: the second and third Saturdays and the last 13 days.

Wise County: antlered bucks only—no either-sex days. Only deer with antlers above the hairline may be taken.

Wythe County: full season.

-National forest and department-owned lands: the second Saturday and the last day.

York County: full season.

B. Except as provided in the subsection A of this section, deer of either sex may be taken full season during the general firearms deer season within the incorporated limits of any city or town, state park, national wildlife refuge, or military installation that allows deer hunting or within any common interest community participating in the special urban archery season according to provisions of [4VAC15-90-70](#).

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

Charles City, Goochland, King and Queen, King William, New Kent, Page, Powhatan, and Spotsylvania counties. The private land deer population index in these counties is currently above the desired deer population management objective bracket in the Department's deer management plan. Additional either-sex deer hunting days should assist in bringing the deer population back down to the desired level(s).

Chesterfield. The proposed increase in firearms either-sex deer hunting days in Chesterfield County is a proactive change. The private land deer population index in Chesterfield County is currently at the top end, but within the desired deer population objective bracket found in the Department's deer management

plan and has increased significantly over the past five years. Additional either-sex deer hunting days should assist in bringing the deer population back down slightly.

Fluvanna. The proposed increase in firearms either-sex deer hunting days in Fluvanna County is a proactive change. The private land deer population index in Fluvanna County is currently at the top end of its desired deer population objective bracket found in the Department's deer management plan; however, local staff feels that additional either-sex deer hunting opportunities can and should be provided at this time.

Rockingham (private lands west of Routes 613 and 731). In fall 2008, the Department created a special deer management unit in western Rockingham in response to public concerns regarding low deer numbers. Since that time, conservative deer regulations have been in place in this area on both public and private lands. Anecdotal comments would appear to indicate that deer populations have increased in this unit over the past decade, especially on private lands. Additionally, numerous comments were received during the public comment period for this regulation cycle requesting more either-sex deer hunting days in this area. Additional either-sex deer hunting day will not apply to public lands within this special management area.

C.F. Phelps and Rapidan WMA's. Local Wildlife Division WMA staff have requested a decrease in the number of firearms either-sex deer hunting days on these two areas.

G.R. Thompson WMA. The first CWD deer found in Fauquier County in fall 2019 was killed on the G.R. Thompson WMA. Wildlife Health staff has requested an increase on the number of either-sex deer hunting days on this area.

Hardware River WMA. The number of firearms either-sex deer hunting days are being increased in Fluvanna County from 15 to 31. The proposal will leave the number on the Hardware River WMA at 15 (no change).

Oakley Forest WMA. Oakley Forest WMA currently follows Spotsylvania County's either-sex deer hunting days. However, there is a need to separate the WMA from the county-wide season as Spotsylvania County is proposed for an increase to full season either-sex deer hunting. The deer population on Oakley Forest WMA appears to have reached the desired population level after several years of the current season structure. In order to stabilize the deer population, reducing the antlerless harvest is necessary to maintain the desired population level and retain hunter satisfaction.

White Oak Mountain WMA. Local Wildlife Division WMA staff have requested an increase in the number of firearms either-sex deer hunting days on this area.

Harvest Reporting Regulations

4VAC15-90-231

Game: Deer: Validating tags and checking deer by licensee or permittee.

Summary:

The proposal is to (i) address electronic deer tags and reporting deer using the eNotch feature of the Department's GoOutdoorsVA smartphone application, (ii) remove text related to checking, check stations, and check cards, (iii) simplify wording where possible and break the regulation into a simpler and more logical order, and (iv) amend the section on mandatory disease testing to include mandatory drop off of deer heads from designated areas on designated days.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-90-231. Validating tags and ~~checking~~ reporting deer by licensee or permittee.

A. Any person killing a deer shall, before removing the carcass from the place of kill, validate an appropriate tag on ~~his~~ their special license for hunting deer and turkey, bonus deer permit, or special permit by completely removing the designated notch area from the tag or by electronically notching a tag and reporting the deer using the department's mobile harvest reporting application. Place of kill shall be defined as the location where the animal is first reduced to possession. It shall be unlawful for any person to validate (notch) a deer tag from any special license for hunting deer and turkey, bonus deer permit, or special permit prior to the killing of a deer. A deer tag that is mistakenly validated (notched) prior to the killing of a deer must be immediately voided by the licensee or permittee by writing, in ink, the word "VOID" on the line provided on the license tag. All electronically notched tags are permanent and cannot be voided.

B. Upon killing a deer and validating (notching) a license tag, bonus deer permit or special permit, as provided in subsection A of this section, the licensee or permittee shall, upon vehicle transport of the carcass or at the conclusion of legal hunting hours, whichever occurs first, and without unnecessary delay, ~~present the carcass and validated (notched) license tag, bonus deer permit or special permit to an authorized checking station or to an appropriate representative of the department in the county or adjoining county in which the deer was killed or~~ report the kill through the department's automated harvest reporting system. ~~All deer killed after the first Saturday in January (as prescribed in 4VAC15-90-10 and 4VAC15-90-70) must be checked by telephone or Internet.~~ At such time, the person ~~checking or~~ reporting the carcass will be given a ~~game check card furnished by the department or a~~ confirmation number ~~from the automated reporting system~~. The successful hunter shall then immediately record the ~~game check card number or~~ confirmation number, in ink, on the line provided on the tag that was validated (notched) in the field. ~~If checked at a big game check station, the game check card must be kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the carcass is left unattended, the game check card must be securely attached to the carcass.~~

C. ~~If After~~ the kill is reported ~~using the automated harvest reporting system~~, no ~~check card written documentation~~ is required as long as the hunter who killed the animal is in possession of the carcass. If the ~~automated harvest~~ reported carcass is left unattended or transferred to the possession of another individual, written documentation including the successful hunter's full name, the date the animal was killed, and the confirmation number must be created and kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the carcass is left unattended, this written documentation must be securely attached to the carcass. ~~Processed carcass parts of a deer killed legally in Virginia may be transported; however, upon request of any authorized law enforcement officer, sufficient verbal or written information necessary to properly establish legal possession must be furnished immediately.~~

~~ED.~~ It shall be unlawful for any person to destroy the identity of the sex of any deer killed unless and until the license tag, bonus deer permit or special permit is validated (notched) and checked reported as required by this section. Successful deer hunters are allowed to dismember the carcass to pack it out from the place of kill, after an appropriate license tag has been validated (notched) as required in subsection A of this section, as long as they do not destroy the identity of the sex and all the parts of the carcass are present when the deer is ~~checked at a big game check station or reported through the automated harvest reporting system. Any deer found in the possession of any person without a validated (notched) license tag or documentation that the deer has been checked (via a big game check station or the automated harvest reporting system) as required by this section shall be forfeited to the Commonwealth to be disposed of as provided by law reported.~~

E. Processed carcass parts of a deer killed legally in Virginia may be transported. However, upon request of any authorized law-enforcement officer, sufficient verbal or written information necessary to properly establish legal possession must be furnished immediately.

F. Any deer found in the possession of any person without a validated (notched) license tag or documentation that the deer has been reported as required by this section shall be forfeited to the Commonwealth to be disposed of as provided by law.

~~DG.~~ Upon killing a deer within an area designated by the department for deer disease management and on days designated by the department, the licensee or permittee shall present the carcass, ~~on the day of kill,~~ at, or submit carcass parts or samples as directed by the department to, a location designated by the department for the purposes of disease surveillance or biological monitoring.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

eNotch. The proposal will address electronic deer tags and reporting deer using the eNotch feature of the Department's GoOutdoorsVA smartphone application.

Check stations and check cards. The proposal removes all references and text related to physical check stations and check cards. The Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) plans to transition to 100% electronic harvest reporting starting September 1, 2021 at the beginning of the 2021-22 hunting season. All hunters (including those who are not required to purchase a license) who harvest a deer next fall will need to report their harvest by calling DWR (866-GOT-GAME), logging on to gooutdoorsvirginia.com, or by using the eNotch option of the GoOutdoorVA mobile phone application (free though the app store).

Mandatory harvest reporting, a cornerstone of DWR's game management program for more than 70 years, will remain vital for game management in Virginia for many years to come. Thus, it is critical that every hunter report their harvest using one of the electronic reporting systems. Since 2004 DWR has offered some form of electronic reporting, and beginning in 2019 electronic reporting options were available for all species for which reporting is required. In fall 2019, 86% of all deer, 93% of fall turkeys, 100% of spring turkeys, 100% of bobcats, and 58% of all bears were reported through an electronic reporting system.

Format. Over the past several decades changes to this regulation (transportation of processed parts, forfeiture, etc.) have become embedded in unrelated sections. Changes in format made in this version do not change the meaning of the regulation but make it more intuitive and readable.

Mandatory Disease Submission. For most of the past decade, the Department has required deer hunters in CWD positive or at risk areas to bring their deer to mandatory CWD sampling stations staffed by DWR staff and volunteers on designated days; typically the first and/or second Saturday of the firearms deer season. Staff would like to broaden this disease testing in CWD areas to include the mandatory dropping off of deer heads at unmanned collection sites set up in designated areas on designated days/seasons.

4VAC15-50-81

Game: Bear: Validating tags and checking bear and tooth submission by licensee or permittee.

Summary:

This proposal is to remove all references to checking, check stations, and check cards to reflect the requirement for all big game harvests to be reported electronically using either the telephone, internet, or GoOutdoors Virginia mobile harvest reporting application beginning in the 2021-22 hunting season.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-50-81. Validating tags and ~~checking reporting~~ bear and tooth submission by licensee or permittee.

A. Any person killing a bear shall, before removing the carcass from the place of kill, validate an appropriate tag on their special license for hunting bear or special permit by completely removing the designated notch area from the tag or by electronically notching a tag and reporting the bear using the department's mobile harvest reporting application. Place of kill shall be defined as the location where the animal is first reduced to possession. It shall be unlawful for any person to validate (notch) a bear tag from any special license for hunting bear or special permit prior to the killing of a bear. A bear tag that is mistakenly validated (notched) prior to the killing of a bear must be immediately voided by the licensee or permittee by writing, in ink, the word "VOID" on the line provided on the license tag. All electronically notched tags are permanent and cannot be voided.

B. Upon killing a bear and validating (notching) a license tag or special permit, as provided in subsection A of this section, the licensee shall, upon vehicle transport of the carcass or at the conclusion of legal hunting hours, whichever occurs first, and without unnecessary delay, ~~present the carcass and validated (notched) license tag or special permit to an authorized bear checking station or to an appropriate representative of the department in the county or adjoining county in which the bear was killed or~~ report the kill through the department's automated harvest reporting system. At such time, the person ~~checking or~~ reporting the carcass will be given ~~a black bear check card furnished by the department or~~ a confirmation number from the automated reporting system. The successful hunter shall then immediately record the ~~game check card number or~~ confirmation number, in ink, on the line provided on the tag that was validated (notched) in the field. ~~If checked at an authorized bear check station, the black bear check card must be kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the carcass is left unattended, the bear check card must be securely attached to the carcass. If After~~ the kill is reported ~~using the automated harvest reporting system~~, no ~~check card written documentation~~ is required as long as the hunter who killed the animal is in possession of the carcass. If the ~~automated harvest~~ reported carcass is left unattended or transferred to the possession of another individual, written documentation including the successful hunter's full name, the date the animal was killed, and the confirmation number must be created and kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the carcass is left unattended, this written documentation must be securely attached to the carcass. Processed carcass parts of a bear killed legally in Virginia may be transported; however, upon request of any authorized law-enforcement officer, sufficient verbal or written information necessary to properly establish legal possession must be furnished immediately.

C. ~~If the carcass is checked at a bear check station, upon presentation of the carcass and validated (notched) license tag or special permit to the bear checking station, the licensee shall surrender or allow to be removed one premolar tooth from the carcass. If the kill is reported through the department's~~

~~automated harvest reporting system, A~~ a premolar tooth must be removed by the hunter immediately after reporting the kill through the department's automated harvest reporting system. The premolar shall be placed in an envelope furnished by the department and labeled with the hunter's full name, check confirmation number, date of kill, and the sex of the harvested bear. This envelope with premolar and accompanying information must be mailed or delivered to the department no later than 14 days after the close of the bear harvest season.

D. It shall be unlawful for any person to destroy the identity of the sex of any bear killed unless and until the license tag or special permit is validated (notched) and checked reported as required by this section. Successful bear hunters are allowed to dismember the carcass to pack it out from the place of kill, after an appropriate license tag has been validated (notched) as required in subsection A of this section, as long as they do not destroy the identity of the sex, and all the parts of the carcass are present when the bear is ~~checked at an authorized bear checking station or~~ reported through the automated harvest reporting system. Any bear found in the possession of any person without a validated (notched) license tag or documentation that the bear has been ~~checked- reported through the department's at an authorized bear checking station or~~ automated harvest reporting system as required by this section shall be forfeited to the Commonwealth to be disposed of as provided by law.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

Beginning in the fall of 2021 all harvest reporting will occur electronically through either the telephone, internet, or GoOutdoors mobile application. Mandatory game checking, a cornerstone of DWRs game management program for more than 70 years, will remain vital for game management in Virginia for many years to come. Thus, it is critical that every hunter report their harvest using one of the electronic reporting systems. Since 2004, DWR has offered some form of electronic reporting, and beginning in 2019, electronic reporting options were available for all species for which reporting is required. In fall 2019, 86% of all deer, 93% of fall turkeys, 100% of spring turkeys, 100% of bobcats, and 58% of all bears were reported through an electronic reporting system.

The proposed amendments remove all references to physical check stations and check cards and adds language in reference to the “e-notch” feature of the mobile application which allows a hunter to electronically notch a tag on their license from their smartphone.

4VAC15-240-81

Game: Turkey: Validating tags and checking turkey by licensee

Summary:

This proposal is to remove all references to checking, check stations, and check cards to reflect the requirement for all big game harvests to be reported electronically using either the telephone, internet, or GoOutdoors Virginia mobile harvest reporting application beginning in the 2021-22 hunting season.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-240-81 Validating tags and ~~checking reporting~~ turkey by licensee.

A. Any person killing a turkey shall, before removing the carcass from the place of kill, validate an appropriate tag on his special license for hunting deer and turkey by completely removing the designated notch area from the tag or by electronically notching a tag and reporting the turkey using the department's mobile harvest reporting application. Place of kill shall be defined as the location where the animal is first reduced to possession. It shall be unlawful for any person to validate (notch) a turkey tag from any special license for hunting deer and turkey prior to the killing of a turkey. A turkey tag that is mistakenly validated (notched) prior to the killing of a turkey must be immediately voided by the licensee by writing, in ink, the word "VOID" on the line provided on the tag. All electronically notched tags are permanent and cannot be voided.

B. Upon killing a turkey and validating (notching) a license tag, as provided above, the licensee shall, upon vehicle transport of the carcass or at the conclusion of legal hunting hours, whichever occurs first, and without unnecessary delay, ~~present the carcass and validated (notched) license tag to an authorized checking station or to an appropriate representative of the department in the county or adjoining county in which the turkey was killed or~~ report his kill through the department's automated harvest reporting system. ~~Turkeys killed during the January season (as prescribed in 4VAC15-240-10) and the spring turkey seasons (as prescribed in 4VAC15-240-40 and 4VAC15-240-60) must be reported through the department's automated harvest reporting system. The person reporting the carcass will be given a game check card furnished by the department or~~ a confirmation number from the automated harvest reporting system. The successful hunter shall then immediately record the ~~game check card number or~~ confirmation number, in ink, on the line provided on the license tag that was validated (notched) in the field. ~~If checked at a big game check station, the game check card must be kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the carcass is left unattended, the game check card must be securely attached to the carcass.~~ If reported using the automated harvest reporting system, no check card is required as long as the hunter who killed the turkey is in possession of the carcass. If the automated harvest reported carcass is left unattended or transferred to the possession of another individual, written documentation including the successful hunter's full name, the date the turkey was killed, and the confirmation number must be created and kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the carcass is left unattended, this written documentation must be securely attached to the carcass.

C. It shall be unlawful for any person to destroy the identity of the sex of any turkey killed unless and until the license tag is validated (notched) and reported ~~to an authorized checking station or to an appropriate representative of the department in the county or adjoining county in which the turkey was killed or~~ by using the automated harvest reporting system as required by this section. Any turkey found in the possession of any person without a validated (notched) license tag or documentation that the turkey has been reported ~~to an authorized checking station or to an appropriate representative of the department~~

~~in the county or adjoining counties in which the turkey was killed or~~ by using the automated harvest reporting system as required by this section shall be forfeited to the Commonwealth to be disposed of as provided by law.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

Beginning in the fall of 2021 all harvest reporting will occur electronically through either the telephone, internet, or GoOutdoors mobile application. Mandatory game checking, a cornerstone of DWRs game management program for more than 70 years, will remain vital for game management in Virginia for many years to come. Thus, it is critical that every hunter report their harvest using one of the electronic reporting systems. Since 2004, DWR has offered some form of electronic reporting, and beginning in 2019, electronic reporting options were available for all species for which reporting is required. In fall 2019, 86% of all deer, 93% of fall turkeys, 100% of spring turkeys, 100% of bobcats, and 58% of all bears were reported through an electronic reporting system.

The proposed amendments remove all references to physical check stations and check cards and adds language in reference to the “e-notch” feature of the mobile application which allows a hunter to electronically notch a tag on their license from their smartphone.

4VAC15-90-241

Game: Deer: Checking deer by persons exempt from license requirement or holding a license authorization number.

Summary:

The proposal is to (i) remove text related to checking, check stations, and check cards, (ii) simplify wording where possible and break the regulation into a simpler and more logical order, and (iii) amend the section on mandatory disease testing to include mandatory drop off of deer heads from designated areas on designated days.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-90-241. **Checking Reporting** deer by persons exempt from license requirement or holding a license authorization number.

A. Upon killing a deer, any person (i) exempt from license requirement as prescribed in § [29.1-301](#) of the Code of Virginia, (ii) issued a complimentary license as prescribed in § [29.1-339](#) of the Code of Virginia, (iii) holding a permanent license issued pursuant to § [29.1-301](#) E of the Code of Virginia, or (iv) holding a Virginia license authorization number issued by a telephone or electronic media agent pursuant to § [29.1-327](#) B of the Code of Virginia shall, upon vehicle transport of the carcass or at the conclusion of legal hunting hours, whichever occurs first, and without unnecessary delay, ~~present the carcass to an authorized checking station or to any appropriate representative of the department in the county or adjoining county in which the deer was killed or~~ report the kill through the department's automated harvest reporting system. ~~All deer killed after the first Saturday in January (as prescribed in 4VAC15-90-22 and 4VAC15-90-70) must be checked by telephone or Internet.~~ At such time, the person ~~checking or~~ reporting the carcass shall be given ~~a game check card furnished by the department or~~ a confirmation number ~~from the automated reporting system. If checked at a big game check station, the game check card must be kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the carcass is left unattended, the game check card must be securely attached to the carcass. If the kill is reported using the automated harvest reporting system,~~ the successful hunter shall immediately create written documentation including the successful hunter's full name, the date the animal was killed, and the confirmation number. This written documentation must be kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the ~~automated harvest reported~~ carcass is transferred to the possession of another individual, the written documentation must be transferred with the carcass to the individual and kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the carcass is left unattended, this written documentation must be securely attached to the carcass. ~~Processed carcass parts of a deer killed legally in Virginia may be transported; however, upon request of any authorized law enforcement officer, sufficient verbal or written information necessary to properly establish legal possession must be furnished immediately.~~

B. It shall be unlawful for any person to destroy the identity (sex) of any deer killed until the deer is checked reported as required by this section. Successful deer hunters are allowed to dismember the carcass to pack it out from the place of kill as long as they do not destroy the identity of the sex and all the parts of the carcass are present when the deer is ~~checked at a big game check station or reported through the automated harvest reporting system. Any deer that has not been checked (via a big game check station or the automated harvest reporting system) as required by this section found in the possession of any person exempt from license requirements or holding a license authorization number shall be forfeited to the Commonwealth to be disposed of as provided by law reported.~~

C. Processed carcass parts of a deer killed legally in Virginia may be transported; however, upon request of any authorized law enforcement officer, sufficient verbal or written information necessary to properly establish legal possession must be furnished immediately.

D. Any deer that has not been reported as required by this section found in the possession of any person exempt from license requirements or holding a license authorization number shall be forfeited to the Commonwealth to be disposed of as provided by law.

~~CE~~. Upon killing a deer within an area designated by the department for deer disease management and on days designated by the department, the licensee or permittee shall present the carcass, ~~on the day of kill,~~ at, or submit carcass parts or samples as directed by the department to, a location designated by the department for the purposes of disease surveillance or biological monitoring.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

Check stations and check cards. The proposal will remove all references and text related to physical check stations and check cards. The Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) plans to transition to 100% electronic harvest reporting starting September 1, 2021 at the beginning of the 2021-22 hunting season. All hunters (including those who are not required to purchase a license) who harvest a deer next fall will need to check their harvest by calling DWR (866-GOT-GAME), logging on to gooutdoorsvirginia.com, or by using the eNotch option of the GoOutdoorVA mobile phone application (free though the app store).

Mandatory game checking, a cornerstone of DWR's game management program for more than 70 years, will remain vital for game management in Virginia for many years to come. Thus, it is critical that every hunter report their harvest using one of the electronic reporting systems. Since 2004, DWR has offered some form of electronic reporting, and beginning in 2019 electronic reporting options were available for all species for which reporting is required. In fall 2019, 86% of all deer, 93% of fall turkeys, 100% of spring turkeys, 100% of bobcats, and 58% of all bears were reported through an electronic reporting system.

Format. Over the past several decades changes to this regulation (transportation of processed parts, forfeiture, etc.) have become embedded in unrelated sections. Changes in format made in this version do not change the meaning of the regulation but make it more intuitive and readable.

Mandatory Disease Submission. For most of the past decade, the Department has required deer hunters in CWD positive or at risk areas bring their deer to mandatory CWD sampling check stations staffed by DWR staff and volunteers on designated days; typically the first and/or second Saturday of the firearms deer season. Staff would like to broaden this disease testing in CWD areas to include the mandatory dropping off of deer heads at unmanned collection sites set up in designated areas on designated days/seasons.

4VAC15-50-91

Game: Bear: Checking bear and tooth submission by persons exempt from license requirements or holding a license authorization number.

Summary:

This proposal is to remove all references to checking, check stations, and check cards to reflect the requirement for all big game harvests to be reported electronically using either the telephone, internet, or GoOutdoors Virginia mobile harvest reporting application beginning in the 2021-22 hunting season.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-50-91. Checking Reporting bear and tooth submission by persons exempt from license requirements or holding a license authorization number.

A. Upon killing a bear, any person (i) exempt from license requirements as prescribed in § [29.1-301](#) of the Code of Virginia, (ii) issued a complimentary license as prescribed in § [29.1-339](#) of the Code of Virginia, (iii) holding a permanent license issued pursuant to § [29.1-301](#) E of the Code of Virginia, or (iv) the holder of a Virginia license authorization number issued by a telephone or electronic media agent pursuant to § [29.1-327](#) B of the Code of Virginia shall, upon vehicle transport of the carcass or at the conclusion of legal hunting hours, whichever occurs first, and without unnecessary delay, ~~present the carcass to an authorized bear checking station or to any appropriate representative of the department in the county or adjoining county in which the bear was killed, or~~ report the kill through the department's automated harvest reporting system. At such time, the person checking or reporting the carcass shall be given a ~~black bear check card furnished by the department or a~~ confirmation number from the automated reporting system. ~~If checked at a bear check station, the black bear check card must be kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the carcass is left unattended, the black bear check card must be securely attached to the carcass. If after~~ the kill is reported using the automated harvest reporting system, the successful hunter shall immediately create written documentation including the successful hunter's full name, the date the animal was killed, and the confirmation number. This written documentation must be kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the automated harvest reported carcass is transferred to the possession of another individual, the written documentation must be transferred with the carcass to the individual and kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the carcass is left unattended, this written documentation must be securely attached to the carcass. Processed carcass parts of a black bear killed legally in Virginia may be transported; however, upon request of any authorized law-enforcement officer, sufficient verbal or written information necessary to properly establish legal possession must be furnished immediately.

~~B. If the bear is checked at a bear checking station, the person checking the carcass shall surrender or allow to be removed one premolar tooth from the carcass. If the kill is reported through the department's automated harvest reporting system, a A premolar tooth must be removed by the hunter immediately after reporting the kill through the department's automated harvest reporting system. The premolar shall be placed in an envelope furnished by the department and labeled with the hunter's full name, check confirmation number, date of kill, and the sex of the harvested bear. This envelope with premolar and accompanying information must be mailed or delivered to the department no later than 14 days after the close of the bear harvest season.~~

C. It shall be unlawful for any person to destroy the identity of the sex of any bear killed until the bear is checked reported as required by this section. Successful bear hunters are allowed to dismember the

carcass to pack it out from the place of kill as long as they do not destroy the identity of the sex and all the parts of the carcass are present when the bear is ~~checked at an authorized bear check station or~~ reported through the automated harvest reporting system. Any bear that has not been ~~checked,~~ reported through the department's automated harvest reporting system as required by this section, found in the possession of any person exempt from the license requirements or holding a license authorization number shall be forfeited to the Commonwealth to be disposed of as provided by law.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

Beginning in the fall of 2021 all harvest reporting will occur electronically through either the telephone, internet, or GoOutdoors mobile application. Mandatory game checking, a cornerstone of DWRs game management program for more than 70 years, will remain vital for game management in Virginia for many years to come. Thus, it is critical that every hunter report their harvest using one of the electronic reporting systems. Since 2004, DWR has offered some form of electronic reporting, and beginning in 2019, electronic reporting options were available for all species for which reporting is required. In fall 2019, 86% of all deer, 93% of fall turkeys, 100% of spring turkeys, 100% of bobcats, and 58% of all bears were reported through an electronic reporting system.

The proposed amendments remove all references to physical check stations and check cards for license exempt hunters.

4VAC15-240-91

Game: Turkey: Checking turkey by persons exempt from license requirement or holding a license authorization number

Summary:

This proposal is to remove all references to checking, check stations, and check cards to reflect the requirement for all big game harvests to be reported electronically using either the telephone, internet, or GoOutdoors Virginia mobile harvest reporting application beginning in the 2021-22 hunting season.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-240-91. Checking Reporting turkey by persons exempt from license requirement or holding a license authorization number.

A. Upon killing a turkey, any person exempt from the license requirement as described in § [29.1-301](#) of the Code of Virginia, or issued a complimentary license as prescribed in § [29.1-339](#), or the holder of a permanent license issued pursuant to § [29.1-301](#) E, or the holder of a Virginia license authorization number issued by a telephone or electronic media agent pursuant to § [29.1-327](#) B shall, upon vehicle transport of the carcass or at the conclusion of legal hunting hours, whichever comes first, and without unnecessary delay, ~~present the carcass to an authorized checking station or to an appropriate representative of the department in the county or adjoining county in which the turkey was killed or~~ report his kill through the department's automated harvest reporting system. ~~Turkeys killed during the January season (as prescribed in 4VAC15-240-10) and the spring turkey seasons (as prescribed in 4VAC15-240-40 and 4VAC15-240-60) must be reported through the department's automated harvest reporting system.~~ The person reporting the carcass shall be given a ~~game check card furnished by the department or a~~ confirmation number from the automated harvest reporting system. ~~If checked at a big game check station, the game check card must be kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the carcass is left unattended, the game check card must be securely attached to the carcass. If reported using the automated harvest reporting system,~~ No check card is required as long as the hunter who killed the turkey is in possession of the carcass. If the automated harvest reported carcass is left unattended or transferred to the possession of another individual, written documentation including the successful hunter's full name, the date the turkey was killed, and the confirmation number must be created and kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the automated harvest reported carcass is transferred to the possession of another individual, the written documentation must be transferred with the carcass to the individual and kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the carcass is left unattended, this written documentation must be securely attached to the carcass.

B. It shall be unlawful for any person to destroy the identity of the sex of any turkey killed until the turkey is reported ~~to an authorized checking station or to an appropriate representative of the department in the county or adjoining county in which the turkey was killed or~~ by using the automated harvest reporting system as required by this section. Any turkey that has not been reported ~~to an authorized checking station or to an appropriate representative of the department in the county or adjoining county or counties in which the turkey was killed or~~ by using the automated harvest reporting system as required by this section found in the possession of any person exempt from license requirements or holding a license authorization number shall be forfeited to the Commonwealth to be disposed of as provided by law.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

Beginning in the fall of 2021 all harvest reporting will occur electronically through either the telephone, internet, or GoOutdoors mobile application. Mandatory game checking, a cornerstone of DWRs game management program for more than 70 years, will remain vital for game management in Virginia for many years to come. Thus, it is critical that every hunter report their harvest using one of the electronic reporting systems. Since 2004, DWR has offered some form of electronic reporting, and beginning in 2019, electronic reporting options were available for all species for which reporting is required. In fall 2019, 86% of all deer, 93% of fall turkeys, 100% of spring turkeys, 100% of bobcats, and 58% of all bears were reported through an electronic reporting system.

The proposed amendments remove all references to physical check stations and check cards for license exempt hunters.

Bear & Wild Turkey Regulations

4VAC15-50-120

Game: Bear: Bear hound training season.

Summary:

This proposal will add Dinwiddie County to the list of counties allowing bear hound training season as originally intended when the training season was initiated in that area in 2013.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-50-120. Bear hound training season.

A. It shall be lawful to chase black bear with dogs, without capturing or taking, from August 1 through the last Saturday in September, both dates inclusive, in the Counties of Albemarle, Alleghany, Amherst, Augusta, Bath, Bedford, Bland, Botetourt, Brunswick, Buchanan, Carroll, Charlotte, Craig, Culpeper, Dickenson, Floyd, Franklin, Giles, Grayson (east of Route 16), Greene, Greenville, Highland, Lee, Lunenburg, Madison, Mecklenburg, Montgomery, Nelson, Page, Pulaski, Rappahannock, Roanoke (west of I-81), Rockbridge, Rockingham, Russell, Scott, Shenandoah, Smyth (except for the part southeast of I-81 and west of State Route 16), Tazewell, Warren, Washington (northwest of I-81), Wise, and Wythe and in the Cities of Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach.

B. It shall be lawful to chase black bear with dogs, without capturing or taking, from the Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 days following, both dates inclusive, in the Counties of Amelia, Appomattox, Buckingham, Brunswick, Campbell (east of the Norfolk Southern Railroad), Charles City, Charlotte, Cumberland, Dinwiddie, Essex, Gloucester, Greenville, Halifax, Isle of Wight, James City, King and Queen, King George, King William, Lancaster, Lunenburg, Mathews, Mecklenburg, Middlesex, New Kent, Northumberland, Nottoway, Pittsylvania (east of the Norfolk Southern Railroad), Prince Edward, Prince George, Richmond, Southampton, Surry, Sussex, Westmoreland, and York.

C. It shall be unlawful to have in possession a firearm, bow, crossbow, or any weapon capable of taking a black bear while participating in the bear hound training season. The meaning of "possession" for the purpose of this section shall include having a firearm, bow, crossbow, or any weapon capable of taking a black bear in or on one's person, vehicle, or conveyance.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

In 2013 when the November bear hound training season was initiated for numerous counties in the southern Piedmont and Northern Neck area, Dinwiddie County was inadvertently left off the list of included counties. Since the initiation of the season, Dinwiddie County has been listed in the DWR hunting digest as a participating locality with no issues. This regulation proposal simply will add Dinwiddie into the training season regulation as it was intended in 2013.

4VAC15-240-20

Game: Turkey: Open season; certain counties and areas; two-week season.

Summary:

This proposal will remove Orange County from the list of counties which have a two week fall turkey season and add it to the regulation for a six week fall turkey season (4VAC15-240-32).

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-240-20 Open season; certain counties and areas; two-week season.

It shall be lawful to hunt turkeys 14 days immediately before the Saturday prior to the first Monday in November and on Thanksgiving Day in the Counties of Albemarle, Alleghany, Augusta, Bath, Greene, Highland, Madison, Page, ~~Orange~~, and Rockingham.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

Current population trends and density estimates for Orange County show positive improvements in the status of the turkey population. Orange County currently has a moderate turkey density with a population trend that is increasing at a significant rate. Staff believe the population is stable enough to sustain an increased fall harvest opportunity based on the current population metrics. The remaining counties in this grouping of two week fall season do not currently indicate population trends of significant increases that would allow for additional fall harvest opportunities.

4VAC15-240-32

Game: Turkey: Open season; certain counties and areas; six week season

Summary:

This proposal seeks to add Orange County to the counties with a six week fall turkey season.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-240-32 Open season; certain counties and areas; six week season.

It shall be lawful to hunt turkeys 14 days immediately before the Saturday prior to the first Monday in November; on Thanksgiving Day and the day before; on the Monday nearest December 2 and for 12 days following, both dates inclusive; and on the second Saturday in January and for 14 days following in the Counties of Amherst, Appomattox, Brunswick, Buchanan, Buckingham, Campbell, Charlotte, Chesterfield, Cumberland, Floyd, Fluvanna, Frederick, Goochland, Halifax, Hanover, Henrico, Henry, Louisa, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Nottoway, Orange, Patrick, Pittsylvania, Prince Edward, Shenandoah, Spotsylvania, Tazewell, and Warren.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

Current population trends and density estimates for Orange County show positive improvements in the status of the turkey population. Orange County currently has a moderate turkey density with a population trend that is increasing at a significant rate. Staff believe the population is stable enough to sustain an increased fall harvest opportunity based on the current population metrics.

4VAC15-240-40

Game: Turkey: Open Season; spring season for bearded turkeys

Summary:

The proposal is to allow hunting from ½ before sunrise to sunset throughout the entire spring turkey season.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-240-40. Open Season; spring season for bearded turkeys.

A. Except as otherwise provided in this section, it shall be lawful to hunt bearded turkeys from the second Saturday in April and for 35 days following, both dates inclusive, from 1/2 hour before sunrise to ~~[12:00 noon prevailing time during the first 23 days and from 1/2 hour before sunrise to sunset during the last 13 days of the spring season sunset 12:00 noon prevailing time during the first 16 days and from 1/2 hour before sunrise to sunset during the last 20 days of the spring season]~~.

B. Turkey hunters 15 years of age and younger and holders of an apprentice hunting license may hunt on the first Saturday in April and the following calendar day from 1/2 hour before sunrise to sunset, when in compliance with applicable license requirements and when accompanied and directly supervised by an adult who has a valid Virginia hunting license on his person or an adult who is exempt from purchasing a hunting license. Adult hunters accompanying youth hunters or apprentice license holders on these days may assist with calling but they shall not carry or discharge weapons. Youth and apprentice turkey hunters are limited on this weekend to one turkey per hunter.

C. Upon receipt of an application from an officer or other designated official representative of any nonprofit organization that has support for sportsmen with impaired mobility as one of its mission statements, the director may issue a permit to an officer or representative of the organization that allows sportsmen with impaired mobility to hunt bearded wild turkeys from 1/2 hour before sunrise to sunset from the 10th through 16th days of the spring season. Such authorization shall be valid only when hunting during an authorized event. All participants shall be in compliance with all requirements of law and regulation that apply during the spring season, and bearded turkeys killed during these events shall count toward daily and annual bag limits.

D. Bearded turkeys may be hunted by calling.

E. It shall be unlawful to use dogs or organized drives for the purpose of hunting.

F. It shall be unlawful to use or have in possession any shot larger than number 2 fine shot when hunting turkeys with a shotgun.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed with the following modification: reducing the opportunity for all-day spring turkey hunting to the final 20 days of the spring turkey season due to public concerns for potential biological impacts to the turkey population.

Rationale:

The Department routinely receives public input seeking additional spring turkey hunting recreation opportunity by providing all day hunting throughout the entire spring turkey season. This feedback

routinely references potential impacts of inclement weather on hunting opportunities and the current ½-hour before sunrise to noon time restriction limiting hunting opportunities due to work-related responsibilities. Frequently referenced are the particular challenges in offering youth spring turkey hunting opportunities due to school responsibilities and the abundance of extracurricular activities for youth during this time of year. Providing additional hunting opportunities during the spring season could have potential population-level impacts, especially as it relates to the unintentional or illegal take of adult hens during the breeding season. During the early portion of Virginia's spring turkey season, adult hens are still actively breeding and may be more vulnerable to unintentional or illegal harvest. This vulnerability decreases as the breeding season progresses and adult hens begin to lay eggs and incubate nests. If mortality of adult hens increases, potential population impacts could arise through decreased productivity within the turkey population. At the same time, spring harvest data suggest that turkey populations are generally stable at an all-time high level across most areas of Virginia. Recognizing the potential for biological impacts, this proposal is made to address demands for additional recreational opportunities and to aide in hunter recruitment.

4VAC15-240-60
Game: Turkey: Archery hunting.

Summary:

The proposal is to align the fall turkey archery season with the current statewide deer and bear archery season dates.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-240-60. Archery hunting.

A. Season. It shall be lawful to hunt turkey with archery equipment or a slingbow in those counties and areas open to fall turkey hunting from the first Saturday in October through the Friday ~~that is 13 days after the Saturday before the last Monday in October prior to the third Monday in November~~, both dates inclusive.

B. Bag limit. The daily and seasonal bag limit for hunting turkey with archery equipment or a slingbow shall be the same as permitted during the general turkey season in those counties and areas open to fall turkey hunting, and any turkey taken shall apply toward the total season bag limit.

C. Carrying firearms prohibited. It shall be unlawful to carry firearms while hunting with archery equipment or a slingbow during the special archery season.

D. Use of dogs prohibited during archery season. It shall be unlawful to use dogs when hunting with archery equipment from the first Saturday in October through the Saturday prior to the second Monday in November, both dates inclusive.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

Currently the fall turkey archery season ends one week earlier than the deer and bear archery season. The archery harvest during the fall season generally makes up approximately 5-7% of the total fall turkey harvest each year and thus does not likely pose a significant biological implication if one additional week was added to this season. By aligning the statewide archery season dates for deer, bear, and turkey this will likely limit hunter confusion with differing end dates while also increasing the opportunity for fall turkey hunting.

Rabbit Regulations

4VAC15-200-15 (New) – formerly 4VAC15-200-11 (New)
Game: Rabbits and Hares: Definitions.

Summary:

The proposal is to prohibit the import and possession of all whole wild rabbit carcasses originating from anywhere outside of Virginia. Restricting importation to dressed carcasses only minimizes the risk of introducing Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Serotype 2 into the Commonwealth through the movement of potentially infected carcass parts.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-200-~~11~~15]. ~~Wild rabbit carcass importation~~Definitions.

The following words or terms, when used in ~~4VAC 15-200-12 and in~~ this ~~section~~chapter], shall have the following meanings unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

“Import” means to transport a carcass or carcass parts, other than those outlined in ~~subsection B of this section~~4VAC15-200-60], into the Commonwealth in such a manner that the carcass or carcass parts are removed from their place of storage within a vehicle or other conveyance and placed or deposited within the Commonwealth. Rabbits harvested on properties that span the Commonwealth's boundary with an adjoining state shall not be considered imported.

"Wild Rabbit" means any member of the taxonomic order Lagomorpha, including rabbits, hares, and pika regulated by the Department of Wildlife Resources and not defined as domestic breeds by the American Rabbit Breeders Association.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

Restricting the importation of wild rabbit carcass parts from animals harvested outside Virginia is an important preventative measure intended to reduce the risk of introducing Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Serotype 2 (RHDV2) into the Commonwealth. Because the virus is present in the blood of infected rabbits, most parts of a carcass are contaminated with the virus. In addition, the virus survives for months in dead rabbit parts and can survive freezing. Due to the hardiness and high infectivity of this virus, rabbits can become infected after coming into contact with infectious carcass parts, therefore long distance movements of potentially infectious carcass parts is believed to be an efficient method of spread to new areas. Once circulating in a rabbit population, the virus causes high morbidity and mortality, potentially leading to severe local or landscape-level rabbit population declines. While it is not known for certain whether RHDV2 will spread across the United States to Virginia, the likelihood is high based upon the documented rapid spread of the disease across both Europe and Australia. To protect Virginia's rabbit species for all citizens, including Virginia rabbit hunters and rabbit dog enthusiasts, steps to limit the importation of potentially infectious rabbit carcass parts from other states are prudent. The DWR RHDV2 Management Plan outlines several pathways to minimize the risk of RHDV2 introduction and

4VAC15-200-30
Game: Rabbits and Hares: Trapping with box traps.

Summary:

The proposal is to limit the translocation of live wild rabbits box trapped in Virginia to within the county of capture in order to reduce the risk of spreading Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Serotype 2 throughout the Commonwealth.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-200-30. Trapping with box traps.

It shall be lawful to trap rabbits with box traps from October 15 through January 31, both dates inclusive; provided, that no traps shall be set on the lands of another without written permission; provided further, that it shall be lawful to live-trap rabbits and transport them only within their county of capture, for release or restocking purposes in Virginia at any time, provided they are not released onto the lands of another without permission.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

Limiting the translocation of wild rabbits is an important preventative measure intended to reduce the risk of spreading Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Serotype 2 (RHDV2) across the Commonwealth. Live animal movement is believed to be the most efficient way to spread this highly infectious and lethal virus long distances. RHDV2 affects all rabbit, hare, and pika species, and spreads easily and rapidly through rabbit populations. Over 80% of infected rabbits may die from it, potentially causing severe local or landscape-level rabbit population declines. While it is not known for certain whether RHDV2 will spread across the United States to Virginia, the likelihood is high based upon the documented rapid spread of the disease across both Europe and Australia. To protect Virginia's rabbit species for all citizens, including Virginia rabbit hunters and rabbit dog enthusiasts, steps to limit the translocation of wild captured rabbits are prudent. The DWR RHDV2 Management Plan outlines several pathways to minimize the risk of RHDV2 introduction and spread in Virginia, including development of an RHDV2 outreach campaign, restricted importation of potentially infectious non-consumable parts of rabbits that originate from outside Virginia, elimination of the disposal of potentially infectious leftover carcass parts on the landscape in Virginia, and restricted translocation of live wild rabbits within Virginia. Because it is possible that the disease could be present in Virginia and remain undetected for some time, the inadvertent spread of RHDV2 across the Commonwealth may be avoided by limiting the translocation of potentially infected live wild rabbits.

4VAC15-200-50 (New) – formerly 4VAC15-200-11 (New)

Game: Rabbits and Hares: Unauthorized wild rabbit carcass importation and possession.

Summary:

The proposal is to prohibit the import and possession of all whole wild rabbit carcasses originating from anywhere outside of Virginia. Restricting importation to dressed carcasses only minimizes the risk of introducing Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Serotype 2 into the Commonwealth through the movement of potentially infected carcass parts.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-200-[1150]. Wild rabbit carcass importation.

No person shall import or possess a whole carcass or any part of a carcass of a wild rabbit originating from outside the Commonwealth, except for a fully dressed carcass with the skin, feet, head, and internal organs removed.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

Restricting the importation of wild rabbit carcass parts from animals harvested outside Virginia is an important preventative measure intended to reduce the risk of introducing Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Serotype 2 (RHDV2) into the Commonwealth. Because the virus is present in the blood of infected rabbits, most parts of a carcass are contaminated with the virus. In addition, the virus survives for months in dead rabbit parts and can survive freezing. Due to the hardiness and high infectivity of this virus, rabbits can become infected after coming into contact with infectious carcass parts, therefore long distance movements of potentially infectious carcass parts is believed to be an efficient method of spread to new areas. Once circulating in a rabbit population, the virus causes high morbidity and mortality, potentially leading to severe local or landscape-level rabbit population declines. While it is not known for certain whether RHDV2 will spread across the United States to Virginia, the likelihood is high based upon the documented rapid spread of the disease across both Europe and Australia. To protect Virginia's rabbit species for all citizens, including Virginia rabbit hunters and rabbit dog enthusiasts, steps to limit the importation of potentially infectious rabbit carcass parts from other states are prudent. The DWR RHDV2 Management Plan outlines several pathways to minimize the risk of RHDV2 introduction and spread in Virginia, including development of an RHDV2 outreach campaign, elimination of the disposal of potentially infectious leftover carcass parts on the landscape in Virginia, restricted translocation of live wild rabbits within Virginia, and restricted importation of potentially infectious non-consumable parts of rabbits that originate from outside Virginia. Rabbit carcasses imported into Virginia from other states, either known to have RHDV2 or not, could be a primary vector for the introduction of RHDV2 into the Commonwealth and thus should be restricted to consumable parts only.

4VAC15-200-60 (New) – formerly 4VAC15-200-12 (New)
Game: Rabbits and Hares: Disposal of wild rabbit parts.

Summary:

The proposal is to prohibit the disposal of wild rabbit parts onto the landscape of the Commonwealth in order to reduce the risk of spreading Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Serotype 2 via deposition of potentially infectious carcass parts on the landscape.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-200-[~~44~~60]. Disposal of wild rabbit parts.

No wild rabbit carcasses or carcass parts may be discarded or disposed of directly on the ground. All such carcasses or carcass parts must be buried at least two feet below ground, incinerated, or securely bagged and discarded in household trash for ultimate disposal in a permitted landfill.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

Eliminating the disposal of potentially infectious rabbit carcass parts on the landscape is an important preventative measure intended to reduce the risk of spreading Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Serotype 2 (RHDV2) throughout the Commonwealth. Because the virus is present in the blood of infected rabbits, most parts of a carcass are contaminated with the virus. In addition, the virus survives for months in dead rabbit parts and can survive freezing. Due to the hardiness and high infectivity of this virus, rabbits can become infected after coming into contact with infectious carcass parts left on the landscape. Thus, disposal of infectious carcass parts on the landscape is believed to be an efficient method of spreading this highly infectious and lethal virus to new areas. Once circulating in a rabbit population, the virus causes high morbidity and mortality, thus potentially leading to severe local or landscape-level rabbit population declines. While it is not known for certain whether RHDV2 will spread across the United States to Virginia, the likelihood is high based upon the documented rapid spread of the disease across both Europe and Australia. To protect Virginia's rabbit species for all citizens, including Virginia rabbit hunters and rabbit dog enthusiasts, steps to limit the deposition of potentially infectious rabbit carcass parts on the landscape is prudent. The DWR RHDV2 Management Plan outlines several pathways to minimize the risk of RHDV2 introduction and spread in Virginia, including development of an RHDV2 outreach campaign, restricted translocation of live wild rabbits within Virginia, restricted importation of potentially infectious non-consumable parts of rabbits that originate from outside Virginia, and elimination of the disposal of potentially infectious leftover carcass parts on the landscape in Virginia. Animal scavengers, such as vultures, opossums, raccoons, and eagles, have the potential to move potentially infectious discarded rabbit carcasses long distances, thereby increasing the likelihood of the spread of RHDV2 across the Commonwealth.

Wildlife Diversity Regulations

4VAC15-20-130

Definitions and Miscellaneous: In General; Endangered and threatened species; adoption of federal list; additional species enumerated.

Summary:

The proposal is to (i) update the date reference to the federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife species; (ii) update the Virginia List of Endangered and Threatened Species to remove the state threatened barking treefrog, add the red-cockaded woodpecker and Clinch dace as endangered, and retain the black rail as endangered to reflect their status in Virginia more accurately; and (iii) update requirements regarding allowable incidental take of little brown and tricolored bats to reflect their status in Virginia and to reduce regulatory burden.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-20-130. Endangered and threatened species; adoption of federal list; additional species enumerated.

A. The board hereby adopts the Federal Endangered and Threatened Species List, Endangered Species Act of December 28, 1973 (16 USC §§ 1531-1543), as amended as of ~~May 7, 2019~~ [January 13, 2021](#) [April 30, 2021](#), and declares all species listed thereon to be endangered or threatened species in the Commonwealth. Pursuant to subdivision 12 of § [29.1-103](#) of the Code of Virginia, the director of the department is hereby delegated authority to propose adoption of modifications and amendments to the Federal Endangered and Threatened Species List in accordance with the procedures of §§ [29.1-501](#) and [29.1-502](#) of the Code of Virginia.

B. In addition to the provisions of subsection A of this section, the following species are declared endangered or threatened in this Commonwealth, and are afforded the protection provided by Article 6 (§ [29.1-563](#) et seq.) of Chapter 5 of Title 29.1 of the Code of Virginia:

1. Fish:

Endangered

Dace, Clinch	Chrosomus sp. cf. saylori
Dace, Tennessee	Phoxinus tennesseensis
Darter, sharphead	Etheostoma acuticeps
Darter, variegate	Etheostoma variatum
Sunfish, blackbanded	Enneacanthus chaetodon

Threatened:

Darter, Carolina	Etheostoma collis
Darter, golden	Etheostoma denoncourti
Darter, greenfin	Etheostoma chlorbranchium
Darter, sickle	Percina williamsi
Darter, western sand	Ammocrypta clara

Madtom, orangefin	Noturus gilberti
Paddlefish	Polyodon spathula
Shiner, emerald	Notropis atherinoides
Shiner, steelcolor	Cyprinella whipplei
Shiner, whitemouth	Notropis alborus

2. Amphibians:

Endangered:

Salamander, eastern tiger	Ambystoma tigrinum
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Threatened:

Salamander, Mabee's	Ambystoma mabeei
Treefrog, barking	Hyla gratiosa

3. Reptiles:

Endangered:

Rattlesnake, canebrake (Coastal Plain population of timber rattlesnake)	Crotalus horridus
Turtle, bog	Glyptemys muhlenbergii
Turtle, eastern chicken	Deirochelys reticularia reticularia

Threatened:

Lizard, eastern glass	Ophisaurus ventralis
Turtle, wood	Glyptemys insculpta

4. Birds:

Endangered:

Plover, Wilson's	Charadrius wilsonia
Rail, black	Laterallus jamaicensis
Woodpecker, red-cockaded	Dryobates borealis
Wren, Bewick's	Thryomanes bewickii bewickii

Threatened:

Falcon, peregrine	Falco peregrinus
Shrike, loggerhead	Lanius ludovicianus
Sparrow, Bachman's	Aimophila aestivalis
Sparrow, Henslow's	Ammodramus henslowii
Tern, gull-billed	Sterna nilotica

5. Mammals:

Endangered:

Bat, Rafinesque's eastern big-eared	<i>Corynorhinus rafinesquii macrotis</i>
Bat, little brown	<i>Myotis lucifugus</i>
Bat, tri-colored	<i>Perimyotis subflavus</i>
Hare, snowshoe	<i>Lepus americanus</i>
Shrew, American water	<i>Sorex palustris</i>
Vole, rock	<i>Microtus chrotorrhinus</i>

6. Mollusks:

Endangered:

Coil, rubble	<i>Helicodiscus lirellus</i>
Coil, shaggy	<i>Helicodiscus diadema</i>
Deertoe	<i>Truncilla truncata</i>
Elephantear	<i>Elliptio crassidens</i>
Elimia, spider	<i>Elimia arachnoidea</i>
Floater, brook	<i>Alasmidonta varicosa</i>
Ghostsail, thankless	<i>Holsingeria unthinksensis</i>
Heelsplitter, Tennessee	<i>Lasmigona holstonia</i>
Lilliput, purple	<i>Toxolasma lividus</i>
Mussel, slippershell	<i>Alasmidonta viridis</i>
Pigtoe, Ohio	<i>Pleurobema cordatum</i>
Pigtoe, pyramid	<i>Pleurobema rubrum</i>
Springsnail, Appalachian	<i>Fontigens bottimeri</i>
Springsnail (no common name)	<i>Fontigens morrisoni</i>
Supercoil, spirit	<i>Paravitrea hera</i>

Threatened:

Floater, green	<i>Lasmigona subviridis</i>
Papershell, fragile	<i>Leptodea fragilis</i>
Pigtoe, Atlantic	<i>Fusconaia masoni</i>
Pimpleback	<i>Quadrula pustulosa pustulosa</i>
Pistolgrip	<i>Tritogonia verrucosa</i>
Riversnail, spiny	<i>Iofluvia</i>
Sandshell, black	<i>Ligumia recta</i>
Supercoil, brown	<i>Paravitrea septadens</i>

7. Arthropods:

Threatened:

Amphipod, Madison Cave	Stygobromus stegerorum
Pseudotremia, Ellett Valley	Pseudotremia cavernarum
Xystodesmid, Laurel Creek	Sigmoria whiteheadi

C. It shall be unlawful to take, transport, process, sell, or offer for sale within the Commonwealth any threatened or endangered species of fish or wildlife except as authorized by law.

D. The incidental take of certain species may occur in certain circumstances and with the implementation of certain conservation practices as described in this subsection:

Species	Location	Allowable Circumstances	Required Conservation Measures	Expected Incidental Take
Little brown bat Tri-colored bat	Statewide	Human health risk – need for removal of individual animals from human-habited structures.	Between May 15 and August 31, no exclusion of bats from maternity colonies, except for human health concerns. DGIF department-permitted nuisance wildlife control operator with DGIF department-recognized certification in techniques associated with removal of bats. Use of exclusion devices that allow individual animals to escape. Manual collection of individual animals incapable of sustaining themselves; transport to a willing and appropriately permitted wildlife rehabilitator.	Little to no direct lethal taking expected.
		Public safety or property damage risk – need for tree removal, application of prescribed fire, or other land management actions affecting	Hibernacula: no tree removal, use of prescribed fire, or other land management action within a 250-foot radius buffer area from December 1 through April 30. Between September 1 and November 30, increase the buffer to a 1/4-mile radius with the following conditions: for	Little to no direct lethal taking expected.

		<p>known roosts; removal of animals from known roosts.</p>	<p>timber harvests greater than 20 acres, retain snags and wolf trees (if not presenting public safety or property risk) and small tree groups up to 15 trees of 3-inch diameter at breast height (dbh) or greater, one tree group per 20 acres. Otherwise, document the need (public safety, property damage risk) for tree removal during this period and verify that no known roost trees exist in the buffer area. Tree removal and prescribed fire are permitted outside of these dates.</p> <p>Known roost trees: no tree removal, use of prescribed fire, or other land management action within a 150-foot radius buffer area from June 1 through July 31, if possible. Otherwise, document public safety or property damage risk.</p> <p><u>DGIF</u>department-permitted nuisance wildlife control operator with <u>DGIF</u>department-recognized certification in techniques associated with removal of bats.</p> <p>Use of exclusion devices that allow individual animals to escape.</p> <p>Manual collection of individual animals incapable of sustaining themselves; transport to a willing and appropriately permitted wildlife rehabilitator.</p>	
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		<p>Facility or project operations when conducted in accordance with a DGIF-approved plan associated with these species.</p>	<p>Development and implementation of a plan that avoids, minimizes, and mitigates incidental take associated with an otherwise lawful activity.</p> <p>The plan shall include, but not be limited to, documenting the specific condition or action, the specific mitigation to be taken, and the expected incidental take.</p>	<p>Little to no direct lethal taking expected.</p>
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Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed with the following modification: citing the most recent version of the Federal Endangered and Threatened Species List which was updated on April 30, 2021.

Rationale:

Adoption of the updated and modified federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife species:

Maintaining the currency of the Board’s adoption of the federal list is essential to clarifying the state and federal status of each affected species and to ensuring compliance with our Cooperative Agreements with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service regarding interagency management of these species. [The updated date of April 30, 2021, reflects the most recent final rule federal action.](#)

Changes to the State List of Endangered and Threatened Species

- A. *Removal of the barking treefrog as a threatened species:*** The Barking Treefrog (*Hyla gratiosa*) is the largest treefrog species in North America ranging from southern New Jersey and Delaware, southward along the southeastern Coastal Plain through most of the Florida Peninsula, and westward to southeastern Louisiana. It was listed as State Threatened under Virginia’s Endangered Species Act on 1 January 1991. According to the 1993 draft Barking Treefrog Recovery Plan, the primary threats that warranted listing were loss of habitat and collection for the pet trade.

Barking Treefrogs have been found breeding in a variety of semi-permanent and permanent wetlands, including cypress-gum swamps, sinkholes, flooded farm fields, road-side ditches, and interdunal swales, many of which are relatively abundant throughout southeastern Virginia. In 1991, there had only been 11 observations of Barking Treefrogs made in Chesterfield, Isle of Wight, Mathews and Surry counties, with unverified sites in Greenville, Southampton and Sussex counties. Since 1999, there have been 71 new observations documented, including ones from several new counties and cities (Brunswick, Gloucester, Greenville, Lunenburg, Nottoway, Prince George, Southampton, Sussex, and Virginia Beach). Only a handful of these observations are from previously documented sites.

The threat of collection for the pet trade is a serious problem for many species of reptile and amphibian. In the past 15 years, however, there have only been two observed incidents of Barking Treefrogs being sold in the Commonwealth. In one instance, the animals were being sold at a PetSmart in James City County, but were removed from display and sale once the issue was brought to the attention of the store manager. In the second instance, the animals were being sold online by a private vender.

Based on the amount of suitable habitat, the lack of evidence that collection for the pet trade is a threat, and the number of new observations recorded since its listing, the proposal is that the Barking Treefrog be removed from the state list of endangered and threatened species. Further, the Board-proposed changes to 4VAC15-360-10 would continue to protect this species from unpermitted possession, collection, sale, etc., since it is a Species of Greatest Conservation Need listed in Virginia’s 2015 Wildlife Action Plan.

- B. Addition of the Clinch dace as an endangered species:** In 1999, a species new to science, the Clinch Dace, *Chrosomus* sp. cf. *saylori*, was discovered in the upper Clinch drainage of Virginia. Since its discovery, the DWR has funded multiple studies to learn basic information needed to conserve the species. Although it remains undescribed, its life history, morphometric and meristic data support its classification as a distinct species.

Like other members of its genus that are headwater specialists, the Clinch Dace is found in streams less than third order and wetted widths averaging 13 feet. Conversely, Clinch Dace may occur at lower local densities than any of the other *Chrosomus* dace due to its more specialized diet (mainly insectivorous), higher trophic position, shorter lifespan (2 years), and lower reproductive success.

Subsequent sampling have found only 15 populations in Russell and Tazewell counties, with a total occupied stream length of just under 20 miles and estimated global population of 6,700 individuals. These populations are small and fragmented; gene flow between them is restricted, maybe non-existent. Further, riparian land use and mining pose significant threats to essential habitat. As such, the Clinch Dace was designated as a Federal Species of Concern and is included in Virginia's Wildlife Action Plan as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need, Tier I - Critical Conservation Need. All studies recommend additional protections including federal and state listing. Two other members of the genus, Blackside Dace (*C. Cumberlandensis*) and Tennessee Dace (*C. tennesseensis*), are federal and state listed respectively. The extremely rare occurrence of the Clinch Dace, and immediate threats to its habitat, warrant its inclusion on the state list of endangered and threatened species as an endangered species and it being afforded all protections of the Virginia Endangered Species Act.

- C. Addition of Red-cockaded Woodpecker as Endangered:** In 2020, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed to downlist the red-cockaded woodpecker (*Dryobates borealis*) from endangered to threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service noted that, through partnerships with the U.S. Department of Defense and the U.S. Forest Service, more than 1.3 million acres of longleaf pine stands (the species' preferred habitat) have been established and hundreds of cavity inserts have been placed in trees to expand and support nesting. Additionally, the number of pairs of red-cockaded woodpeckers has increased by 50% since the time of initial listing.

Virginia is the northernmost extent of the range of this species. In the Commonwealth, the species is only known from two locations – the Piney Grove/Big Woods complex in Sussex County and the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in the cities of Suffolk and Chesapeake. By 1998, the year in which The Nature Conservancy acquired its Piney Grove Preserve, the Virginia population of red-cockaded woodpecker was nearly extirpated, consisting of only 3 potential breeding groups on the Preserve. Aggressive habitat and cavity management on the Preserve, completed by a translocation program active through 2005, has enabled that population to grow to 15 potential breeding groups numbering just over 100 birds. In the past five years, birds from this population have begun pioneering off of the Preserve and onto the DWR's abutting Big Woods Wildlife Management Area, where habitat and cavity management strategies complement those at Piney Grove. A single pair of woodpeckers has nested on the WMA in each of the past two years, and the DWR expects more birds to establish breeding groups on Big Woods. The population at the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge is in

the process of being established via translocations of birds from other populations since 2015, coupled with selective habitat management. Currently, the Refuge population numbers only 11 birds in 3 potential breeding groups. Both locations are highly vulnerable to significant weather events, such as hurricanes and ice storms, as well as wildfires and outbreaks of pine bark beetles. Such events could cause critical losses and erase years of gains by doing untold damage to cavity trees, upon which the birds rely for roosting and nesting. These events could also damage the species' foraging base, which consists of younger, smaller pine trees; these trees are vital in replacing current cavity trees as the latter die out over time. The need to continue aggressive efforts to enhance the species in Virginia, including protection under the Virginia Endangered Species Act, are imperative to its persistence in the state and reflective of its imperiled status in the Commonwealth.

- D. *Retain the state endangered status for the Eastern Black Rail:*** The Eastern Black Rail was state listed as endangered in 2012 following the first systematic breeding survey conducted in areas with suitable habitat on Virginia's coastal plain. Only 16 individuals were detected at 12 sampling points along the eastern shore of the Chesapeake Bay in Accomack County. No Black Rails were detected on the seaside of the Delmarva Peninsula, the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay, along the James, York or Nansemond rivers, or in Back Bay. Only two Black Rails were documented during the Commonwealth's second coastal survey conducted in 2014; both detections were made at Saxis Wildlife Management Area. Virginia's current estimate ranges between 0 and 10 pairs. Several scattered observations of Black Rails have been recorded within the inner Coastal Plain, Piedmont and Mountain regions of the Commonwealth since the late 1930s, although none of these records included confirmation of breeding activity.

The Chesapeake Bay marshes of the Delmarva Peninsula from Dorchester County, Maryland, through Accomack County, Virginia, have long been considered the most important region in the Mid-Atlantic for Black Rails. Black Rail surveys conducted on the bayside and seaside of the Maryland's Delmarva Peninsula in 1990-1992, 2007 and again in 2014 reported a 90% decline in the number of locations where they were found during this 25 year period. Results from Virginia and Maryland suggest that recent dramatic population declines are rapid and devastating. Factors driving the near extirpation of Maryland's and Virginia's breeding population are not completely understood, but likely include habitat loss and degradation due to sea level rise, development, marsh burning and mosquito ditching as well as predation, invasive plants, low reproductive rates, low overwinter survival and environmental contaminants.

In 2020, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) listed the Eastern Black Rail as threatened, despite the >75% decline in the range-wide population during the last 10-20 years. The USFWS based its decision on the wide-ranging nature of the Eastern Black Rail and the opportunity to engage with a diversity of partners to work collaboratively on its recovery. This approach puts a considerable amount of responsibility on states to ensure the species receives the highest degree of protection and management attention at the local level. Typically, when a species on the state list achieves a federal listing status, staff recommends removal of it from the state list and adoption of the federal status. However, in this instance, retaining the species' status as endangered in Virginia affords the DWR the greatest opportunity to meet its obligation of protection and affirms the critical degree of imperilment of this species in the state.

E. *Update incidental take allowances for little brown and tricolored bats.* In 2015, the Board of Wildlife Resources added the little brown and tri-colored bats to the list of state endangered and threatened species as endangered species. Concurrent with that action, the Board also adopted certain provisions under which the incidental take of these two species would be allowed. One of these provisions included “facility or project operations when conducted in accordance with DGIF-approved plan associated with these species.” Since 2015, the DWR has been monitoring population changes of these two species through winter hibernacula counts and documenting summer occurrence and roost identification through multiple DWR-funded mist-netting and acoustic surveys. Due to the continued decline of both species as documented through winter hibernacula counts, and the lack of discovering new roosts through mist-net surveys, staff believes that incidental take resulting from facility or project operations is inconsequential (because there are so few animals of either species on the landscape) and that the development of an “approved plan” for facility or project operations provides little to no conservation gain. As such, the Board proposal removes this specific requirement, which will also reduce regulatory burden, as there is little to no expected incidental take regardless.

Additional housekeeping changes are offered to update the use of “DGIF” to the more appropriate reference of “department.”

4VAC15-30-40**Definitions and Miscellaneous: Importation, Possession, Sale, Etc., of Animals; Importation requirements, possession, and sale of nonnative (exotic) animals.****Summary:**

The proposal is to remove the Mexican axolotl from the list of predatory and undesirable species that cannot be imported, possessed or sold within the Commonwealth without a permit.

Proposed language of amendment:**4VAC15-30-40. Importation requirements, possession and sale of nonnative (exotic) animals.**

A. Permit required. A special permit is required and may be issued by the department, if consistent with the department's fish and wildlife management program, to import, possess, or sell those nonnative (exotic) animals listed in the following table and in [4VAC15-20-210](#) that the board finds and declares to be predatory or undesirable within the meaning and intent of § [29.1-542](#) of the Code of Virginia, in that their introduction into the Commonwealth will be detrimental to the native fish and wildlife resources of Virginia.

AMPHIBIANS			
Order	Family	Genus/Species	Common Name
Anura	Bufonidae	Rhinella marina	Cane toad*
	Pipidae	Hymenochirus spp. Pseudohymenochirus merlini	African dwarf frog
		Xenopus spp.	Tongueless or African clawed frog
Caudata	Ambystomatidae	All species, <u>except</u> <u>Ambystoma</u> <u>mexicanum</u>	All mole salamanders, <u>except</u> <u>Mexican axolotl</u>
BIRDS			
Order	Family	Genus/Species	Common Name
Psittaciformes	Psittacidae	Myiopsitta monachus	Monk parakeet*
Anseriformes	Anatidae	Cygnus olor	Mute swan
FISH			
Order	Family	Genus/Species	Common Name
Cypriniformes	Catostomidae	Catostomus microps	Modoc sucker
		Catostomus santaanae	Santa Ana sucker

		Catostomus warnerensis	Warner sucker
		Ictiobus bubalus	Smallmouth* buffalo
		I. cyprinellus	Bigmouth* buffalo
		I. niger	Black buffalo*
	Characidae	Pygopristis spp. Pygocentrus spp. Rooseveltiella spp. Serrasalmo spp. Serrasalmus spp. Taddyella spp.	Piranhas
	Cobitidae	Misgurnus anguillicaudatus	Oriental weatherfish
	Cyprinidae	Aristichthys nobilis	Bighead carp*
		Chrosomus saylori	Laurel dace
		Ctenopharyngodon idella	Grass carp or white amur
		Cyprinella caerulea	Blue shiner
		Cyprinella formosa	Beautiful shiner
		Cyprinella lutrensis	Red shiner
		Hypophthalmichthys molitrix	Silver carp*
		Mylopharyngodon piceus	Black carp*
		Notropis albizonatus	Palezone shiner
		Notropis cahabae	Cahaba shiner
		Notropis girardi	Arkansas River shiner
		Notropis mekistocholas	Cape Fear shiner
		Notropis simus pecosensis	Pecos bluntnose shiner

		Notropis topeka (= tristis)	Topeka shiner
		Phoxinus cumberlandensis	Blackside dace
		Rhinichthys osculus lethoporus	Independence Valley speckled dace
		Rhinichthys osculus nevadensis	Ash Meadows speckled dace
		Rhinichthys osculus oligoporus	Clover Valley speckled dace
		Rhinichthys osculus ssp.	Foskett speckled dace
		Rhinichthys osculus thermalis	Kendall Warm Springs dace
		Scardinius erythrophthalmus	Rudd
		Tinca tinca	Tench*
Cyprinodontiformes	Poeciliidae	Gambusia gaigei	Big Bend gambusia
		Gambusia georgei	San Marcos gambusia
		Gambusia heterochir	Clear Creek gambusia
		Gambusia nobilis	Pecos gambusia
		Peociliopsis occidentalis	Gila topminnow
Gasterosteiformes	Gasterosteidae	Gasterosteus aculeatus williamsoni	Unarmored threespine stickleback
Gobiesociformes	Gobiidae	Proterorhinus marmoratus	Tubenose goby
		Neogobius melanostomus	Round goby
Perciformes	Centrarchidae	Micropterus henshalli	Alabama bass
	Channidae	Channa spp. Parachanna spp.	Snakeheads

	Cichlidae	Tilapia spp.	Tilapia
		Gymnocephalus cernuum	Ruffe*
	Elassomatidae	Elassoma alabamae	Spring pygmy sunfish
	Percidae	Crystallaria cincotta	Diamond darter
		Etheostoma chermocki	Vermilion darter
		Etheostoma boschungii	Slackwater darter
		Etheostoma chienense	Relict darter
		Etheostoma etowahae	Etowah darter
		Etheostoma fonticola	Fountain darter
		Etheostoma moorei	Yellowcheek darter
		Etheostoma nianguae	Niangua darter
		Etheostoma nuchale	Watercress darter
		Etheostoma okaloosae	Okaloosa darter
		Etheostoma phytophilum	Rush darter
		Etheostoma rubrum	Bayou darter
		Etheostoma scotti	Cherokee darter
		Etheostoma sp.	Bluemask (= jewel) darter
		Etheostoma susanae	Cumberland darter
		Etheostoma wapiti	Boulder darter
		Percina antesella	Amber darter
		Percina aurolineata	Goldline darter
		Percina jenkinsi	Conasauga logperch
		Percina pantherina	Leopard darter
		Percina tanasi	Snail darter
Scorpaeniformes	Cottidae	Cottus sp.	Grotto sculpin
		Cottus paulus (= pygmaeus)	Pygmy sculpin

Siluriformes	Clariidae	All species	Air-breathing catfish
		Noturus baileyi	Smoky madtom
		Noturus crypticus	Chucky madtom
		Noturus placidus	Neosho madtom
		Noturus stanauli	Pygmy madtom
	Ictaluridae	Noturus trautmani	Scioto madtom
Synbranchiformes	Synbranchidae	Monopterus albus	Swamp eel
MAMMALS			
Order	Family	Genus/Species	Common Name
Artiodactyla	Suidae	All Species	Pigs or Hogs*
	Cervidae	All Species	Deer*
Carnivora	Canidae	All Species	Wild Dogs,* Wolves, Coyotes or Coyote hybrids, Jackals and Foxes
	Ursidae	All Species	Bears*
	Procyonidae	All Species	Raccoons and* Relatives
	Mustelidae	All Species	Weasels, Badgers,* Skunks and Otters
		(except Mustela putorius furo)	Ferret
	Viverridae	All Species	Civets, Genets,* Lingsangs, Mongooses, and Fossas
	Herpestidae	All Species	Mongooses*
	Hyaenidae	All Species	Hyenas and Aardwolves*
	Felidae	All Species	Cats*
Chiroptera		All Species	Bats*
Lagomorpha	Leporidae	Brachylagus idahoensis	Pygmy rabbit
		Lepus europeaeus	European hare
		Oryctolagus cuniculus	European rabbit
		Sylvilagus bachmani riparius	Riparian brush rabbit

		Sylvilagus palustris hefneri	Lower Keys marsh rabbit
Rodentia		All species native to Africa	All species native to Africa
	Dipodidae	Zapus hudsonius preblei	Preble's meadow jumping mouse
	Muridae	Microtus californicus scirpensis	Amargosa vole
		Microtus mexicanus hualpaiensis	Hualapai Mexican vole
		Microtus pennsylvanicus dukecampbelli	Florida salt marsh vole
		Neotoma floridana smalli	Key Largo woodrat
		Neotoma fuscipes riparia	Riparian (= San Joaquin Valley) woodrat
		Oryzomys palustris natator	Rice rat
		Peromyscus gossypinus allapaticola	Key Largo cotton mouse
		Peromyscus polionotus alloparys	Choctawhatchee beach mouse
		Peromyscus polionotus ammobates	Alabama beach mouse
		Peromyscus polionotus niveiventris	Southeastern beach mouse
		Peromyscus polionotus peninsularis	St. Andrew beach mouse
		Peromyscus polionotus phasma	Anastasia Island beach mouse

		Peromyscus polionotus trissyllepsis	Perdido Key beach mouse
		Reithrodontomys raviventris	Salt marsh harvest mouse
	Heteromyidae	Dipodomys heermanni morroensis	Morro Bay kangaroo rat
		Dipodomys ingens	Giant kangaroo rat
		Dipodomys merriami parvus	San Bernadino Merriam's kangaroo rat
		Dipodomys nitratoides exilis	Fresno kangaroo rat
		Dipodomys nitratoides nitratoides	Tipton kangaroo rat
		Dipodomys stephensi (including D. cascus)	Stephens' kangaroo rat
		Perognathus longimembris pacificus	Pacific pocket mouse
	Sciuridae	Cynomys spp.	Prairie dogs
		Spermophilus brunneus brunneus	Northern Idaho ground squirrel
		Tamiasciurus hudsonicus grahamensis	Mount Graham red squirrel
Soricomorpha	Soricidae	Sorex ornatus relictus	Buena Vista Lake ornate shrew
MOLLUSKS			
Order	Family	Genus/Species	Common Name
Neotaenioglossa	Hydrobiidae	Potamopyrgus antipodarum	New Zealand mudsnail
Veneroida	Dreissenidae	Dreissena bugensis	Quagga mussel
		Dreissena polymorpha	Zebra mussel
REPTILES			
Order	Family	Genus/Species	Common Name

Crocodilia	Alligatoridae	All species	Alligators, caimans*
	Crocodylidae	All species	Crocodiles*
	Gavialidae	All species	Gavials*
Squamata	Colubridae	Boiga irregularis	Brown tree snake*
CRUSTACEANS			
Order	Family	Genus/Species	Common Name
Decapoda	Cambaridae	Cambarus aculabrum	Cave crayfish
		Cambarus zophonastes	Cave crayfish
		Orconectes rusticus	Rusty crayfish
		Orconectes shoupi	Nashville crayfish
		Pacifastacus fortis	Shasta crayfish
		Procambarus sp.	Marbled crayfish
	Parastacidae	Cherax spp.	Australian crayfish
	Varunidea	Eriocheir sinensis	Chinese mitten crab

B. Temporary possession permit for certain animals. Notwithstanding the permitting requirements of subsection A of this section, a person, company, or corporation possessing any nonnative (exotic) animal, designated with an asterisk (*) in subsection A of this section, prior to July 1, 1992, must declare such possession in writing to the department by January 1, 1993. This written declaration shall serve as a permit for possession only, is not transferable, and must be renewed every five years. This written declaration must include species name, common name, number of individuals, date or dates acquired, sex (if possible), estimated age, height or length, and other characteristics such as bands and band numbers, tattoos, registration numbers, coloration, and specific markings. Possession transfer will require a new permit according to the requirements of this subsection.

C. Exception for certain monk parakeets. A permit is not required for monk parakeets (quakers) that have been captive bred and are closed-banded with a seamless band.

D. Exception for parts or products. A permit is not required for parts or products of those nonnative (exotic) animals listed in subsection A of this section that may be used for personal use, in the manufacture of products, or used in scientific research, provided that such parts or products be packaged outside the Commonwealth by any person, company, or corporation duly licensed by the state in which the parts originate. Such packages may be transported into the Commonwealth, consistent with other state laws and regulations, so long as the original package remains unbroken, unopened and intact until its point of destination is reached. Documentation concerning the type and cost of the animal parts ordered, the purpose and date of the order, point and date of shipping, and date of receiving shall be kept by the person, business, or institution ordering such nonnative (exotic) animal parts. Such documentation shall be open to inspection by a representative of the Department of Wildlife Resources.

E. Exception for prairie dogs. The effective date of listing of prairie dogs under subsection A of this section shall be January 1, 1998. Prairie dogs possessed in captivity in Virginia on December 31, 1997,

may be maintained in captivity until the animals' deaths, but they may not be sold on or after January 1, 1998, without a permit.

F. Exception for snakehead fish. Anglers may legally harvest snakehead fish of the family Channidae, provided that they immediately kill such fish and that they notify the department, as soon as practicable, of such actions.

G. Exception for feral hogs. Anyone may legally trap feral hogs with written permission of the landowner, provided that any trapped hogs are not removed from the trap site alive and are killed immediately.

H. Exception for grass carp. Anglers may legally harvest grass carp of the family Cyprinidae only from public waters of the Commonwealth. It is unlawful to harvest grass carp from any public inland lake or reservoir. Anglers taking grass carp must ensure that harvested grass carp are dead.

I. Exception for Alabama bass. Anglers may possess live Alabama bass of the family Centrarchidae only on the body of water from which the fish were captured, provided that the angler does not live transport these fish outside of the body of water from which the fish were captured. Anglers may only release live Alabama bass back into the body of water from which the fish were captured. Anglers may legally harvest Alabama bass provided that the anglers ensure all harvested Alabama bass are dead.

J. All other nonnative (exotic) animals. All other nonnative (exotic) animals not listed in subsection A of this section may be possessed, purchased, and sold; provided, that such animals shall be subject to all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations, including those that apply to threatened/endangered species, and further provided, that such animals shall not be liberated within the Commonwealth.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

In 2013, the regulations pertaining to *Ambystoma* salamander species were amended due to changes in nomenclature and similarities in appearance between various Ambystomid species (mole salamanders). As such, the Mexican axolotl (*Ambystoma mexicanum*) was added to the list of predatory and undesirable species purely by its taxonomic association. Mexican axolotls are relatively popular in the pet trade and are available exclusively from captive breeders. There is no evidence to support that Mexican axolotls are a threat to native salamander species and should not be precluded from importation or possession in the Commonwealth.

4VAC15-360-60

Fish: Aquatic Invertebrates, Amphibians, Reptiles, and Nongame Fish; Prohibit the sale of salamander and madtom species.

Summary:

The proposal is to exempt the Mexican axolotl (*Ambystoma mexicanum*) from being prohibited for sale.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-360-60. Prohibit the sale of salamander and madtom species.

It shall be unlawful to sell any species of madtom (*Noturus* sp.) and any species of salamander with the exception of nonnative newts (*Salamandridae*) and Mexican axolotls (*Ambystoma mexicanum*).

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

In 2013, the regulations pertaining to *Ambystoma* salamander species were amended due to changes in nomenclature and similarities in appearance between various Ambystomid species (mole salamanders). As such, the Mexican axolotl (*Ambystoma mexicanum*) was added to the list of predatory and undesirable species purely by its taxonomic association. Mexican axolotls are relatively popular in the pet trade and are available exclusively from captive breeders. There is no evidence to support that Mexican axolotls are a threat to native salamander species and should not be precluded from sale in the Commonwealth.

4VAC15-360-10

Fish: Aquatic Invertebrates, Amphibians, Reptiles, and Nongame Fish; Taking aquatic invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles and nongame fish for personal use.

Summary:

The proposals are to (i) limit the number of native and naturalized amphibians and reptiles that can be held in personal possession; (ii) protect from collection those reptiles and amphibians designated as Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Virginia's 2015 Wildlife Action Plan; (iii) remove the use and sale of salamanders as bait; (iv) preclude the collection of reptiles and amphibians on all state and federal lands (not just those within a defined geographic area) without an appropriate permit or license; and (v) establish an online registry to report those animals legally held prior to the effective date of the amendment. By making these proposal, the Department of Wildlife Resources will eliminate the loopholes in which illegal trafficking of reptiles and amphibians in the Commonwealth has been operating and be proactive to future illegal trade issues. The proposal also includes requiring snapping turtles harvested for personal use have a minimum curved-line carapace (top shell) length (CCL) of 13 inches, for consistency with commercial harvest requirements and protection of the species.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-360-10. Taking aquatic invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles and nongame fish for personal use.

A. Possession limits. Except as otherwise provided for in § [29.1-418](#) of the Code of Virginia, [4VAC15-20-130](#), [4VAC15-320-40](#), and the sections of this chapter, it shall be lawful to capture and possess live for private use and not for sale ~~or export~~ no more than ~~one individual of any native or naturalized (as defined in 4VAC15-20-50) species of amphibian or reptile per physical address, five individuals of any single native or naturalized (as defined in 4VAC15-20-50) species of amphibian and reptile~~ and 20 individuals of any single native or naturalized (as defined in [4VAC15-20-50](#)) species of aquatic invertebrate and nongame fish unless specifically listed below:

1. The following species may be taken in unlimited numbers from inland waters statewide: carp, mullet, yellow bullhead, brown bullhead, black bullhead, flat bullhead, snail bullhead, white sucker, northern hogsucker, gizzard shad, threadfin shad, blueback herring (see [4VAC15-320-25](#) for anadromous blueback herring limits), white perch, yellow perch, alewife (see [4VAC15-320-25](#) for anadromous alewife limits), stoneroller (hornyhead), fathead minnow, golden shiner, goldfish, and Asian clams. Grass carp may only be harvested in unlimited numbers from public inland waters of the Commonwealth other than department-owned or department-controlled lakes. Anglers taking grass carp must ensure that all harvested grass carp are dead.

2. See [4VAC15-320-25](#) for American shad, hickory shad, channel catfish, white catfish, flathead catfish, and blue catfish limits.

3. For the purpose of this chapter, "fish bait" shall be defined as native or naturalized species of minnows and chubs (Cyprinidae), ~~salamanders (each under six inches in total length)~~, crayfish, and hellgrammites. The possession limit for taking "fish bait" shall be 50 individuals in aggregate, unless said person has purchased "fish bait" and has a receipt specifying the number of individuals purchased by species, except salamanders and crayfish which cannot be sold pursuant

to the provisions of [4VAC15-360-60](#) and [4VAC15-360-70](#). However, stonerollers (hornyheads), fathead minnows, golden shiners, and goldfish may be taken and possessed in unlimited numbers as provided for in subdivision 1 of this subsection.

4. The daily limit for bullfrogs shall be 15 and for snapping turtles shall be five. Snapping turtles shall only be taken from June 1 to September 30 and must have a minimum curved-line carapace length of 13 inches. Bullfrogs and snapping turtles may not be taken from the banks or waters of designated stocked trout waters.

5. The following species may not be taken or possessed in any number for private use: red-eared slider, and all reptile and amphibian Species of Greatest Conservation Need designated in Virginia's 2015 Wildlife Action Plan eastern hellbender, diamondback terrapin, and spotted turtle.

6. Native amphibians and reptiles, as defined in [4VAC15-20-50](#), that are captured within the Commonwealth and possessed live for private use and not for sale may be liberated under the following conditions:

- a. Period of captivity does not exceed 30 days;
- b. Animals must be liberated at the site of capture;
- c. Animals must have been housed separately from other wild-caught and domestic animals; and
- d. Animals that demonstrate symptoms of disease or illness or that have sustained injury during their captivity may not be released.

7. Native or naturalized amphibians and reptiles, as defined in 4VAC15-20-50, may not be taken or possessed in any number from state or federal land without an appropriate permit or license.

B. Methods of taking species in subsection A of this section. Except as otherwise provided for in the Code of Virginia, [4VAC15-20-130](#), [4VAC15-320-40](#), and other regulations of the board, and except in any waters where the use of nets is prohibited, the species listed in subsection A of this section may only be taken (i) by hand, hook and line; (ii) with a seine not exceeding four feet in depth by 10 feet in length; (iii) with an umbrella type net not exceeding five by five feet square; (iv) by small minnow traps with throat openings no larger than one inch in diameter; (v) with cast nets; and (vi) with hand-held bow nets with diameter not to exceed 20 inches and handle length not to exceed eight feet (such cast net and hand-held bow nets when so used shall not be deemed dip nets under the provisions of § [29.1-416](#) of the Code of Virginia). Gizzard shad and white perch may also be taken from below the fall line in all tidal rivers of the Chesapeake Bay using a gill net in accordance with Virginia Marine Resources Commission recreational fishing regulations. Bullfrogs may also be taken by gigging or bow and arrow and, from private waters, by firearms no larger than .22 caliber rimfire. Snapping turtles may be taken for personal use with hoop nets not exceeding six feet in length with a throat opening not exceeding 36 inches.

C. Areas restricted from taking mollusks. Except as provided for in §§ [29.1-418](#) and [29.1-568](#) of the Code of Virginia, it shall be unlawful to take the spiny riversnail (*Io fluviatilis*) in the Tennessee drainage in Virginia (Clinch, Powell, and the North, South, and Middle Forks of the Holston Rivers and tributaries). It shall be unlawful to take mussels from any inland waters of the Commonwealth.

~~D. Areas restricted from taking salamanders. Except as provided for in §§ 29.1-418 and 29.1-568 of the Code of Virginia, it shall be unlawful to take salamanders in Grayson Highlands State Park and on National Forest lands in the Jefferson National Forest in those portions of Grayson, Smyth, and Washington Counties bounded on the east by State Route 16, on the north by State Route 603 and on the south and west by U.S. Route 58.~~

D. Reduction of possession limits for native and naturalized amphibians and reptiles. Any person in possession of legally-obtained native and naturalized amphibians and reptiles, as defined in 4VAC15-20-50, prior to the change in personal possession allowances in subsection A effective July 1, 2021, must declare such possession to the department by January 1, 2022, in a manner prescribed by the department. This declaration shall serve as authorization for possession only and is not transferable.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

Reducing the personal possession of amphibians and reptiles: The illegal trade in wildlife is a \$20 billion/year global problem that involves ~7,000 species. A sizeable component of this threat to wildlife is the illegal pet trade. The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources has seen an increase in the illegal trafficking of reptiles, turtles in particular, over the past several years. This trend is not limited to Virginia, but is occurring throughout much of the eastern United States, where the greatest abundance and diversity of turtle species occur in North America.

Recently, there have been several significant arrests and cases made in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, New York and New Jersey. These cases involved hundreds, sometimes thousands, of turtles. Currently, one box turtle of exceptional color and pattern may bring as much \$20,000 in China. Although Virginia has not experienced cases of the same magnitude, there is some evidence to indicate that similar activities are occurring in the Commonwealth. Turtles are being illegally poached for sale on the black market for food, used in traditional medicines and religious ceremonies, and as products and souvenirs.

The primary loophole in existing Virginia regulations in which these individuals have been working is the 5 individuals per person, which allows, for example, a family of four to possess up to 20 turtles of any species. This Board proposal would implement an incremental and pragmatic approach to personal possession, allowing Virginians to experience and develop an appreciation for these often under-appreciated species, without disconnecting the public from the resource or impacting populations negatively. Because staffs are unable to predict the next trend(s) in the reptile and amphibian pet trade, the proposal also includes protection from personal possession all reptile and amphibian Species of Greatest Conservation Need designated in Virginia's 2015 Wildlife Action Plan. Additionally, the proposal would disallow collecting of reptiles and amphibians on all federal and state lands in the state, rather than a small subset; these lands are home to many of the more significant breeding and hibernating areas for reptiles and amphibians. This approach should avoid the need to amend regulations frequently as issues emerge.

Should the Board adopt this proposal, the Department would implement a mechanism through its GoOutdoorsVirginia site to facilitate and support reporting of native and naturalized species of reptiles and amphibians currently being held legally in private possession. The proposed approach does not impact the commercial sale of non-native reptiles and amphibians or the few exceptions for the commercial sale of native or naturalized reptiles and amphibians (captive-bred Red Cornsnake and Eastern Kingsnake).

Establishing minimum size for personal harvest of snapping turtles: In 2019, the Board of Wildlife Resources adopted new regulations pertaining to the commercial harvest of snapping turtles, including increasing the minimum harvest size of 11-inch curve-lined carapace length (CCL) to 13 inches. This size increase was based on four years of research that demonstrated a 13-inch CCL was the minimum size that could be harvested and still maintain a positive population growth rate. Currently, there is no size limit for the recreational harvest of snapping turtles for personal use, which can be up to five per day. Creating a recreational minimum harvest size limit of 13-inch CCL eliminates inconsistencies and protects snapping turtle populations for future generations.

Lands & Access Program Regulations

4VAC15-20-100

Definitions and Miscellaneous: In General: Prohibited Use of Vehicles on Department-Owned Lands.

Summary:

The proposal is to allow class one and two electric power-assist bicycles to be used on Department-owned lands where traditional bicycles are allowed, and prohibit class three electric power-assist bicycles as per § 46.2-904.1.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-20-100. Prohibited Use of Vehicles on Department-Owned Lands.

It shall be unlawful on department-owned lands to drive through or around gates designed to prevent entry with any type of motorized vehicle or to use such vehicles to travel anywhere on such lands except on roads open to vehicular traffic. Any motor-driven vehicle shall conform with all state laws for highway travel; provided, that this requirement shall not apply to the operation of motor vehicles for administrative purposes by department-authorized personnel on department-owned lands. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the use of Class one or two electric power-assisted bicycles as defined in § 46.2-100 where traditional bicycles are allowed. Class three electric power-assisted bicycles as defined in § 46.2-100 are prohibited. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the department from allowing the use of wheelchairs or other power-driven mobility devices by individuals with mobility disabilities in accordance with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-336, 104 Stat. 327).

For the purposes of this section, the term "wheelchair" means a manually operated or power-driven device designed primarily for use by an individual with a mobility disability for the main purpose of indoor, or of both indoor and outdoor, locomotion. "Other power-driven mobility device" means any mobility device powered by batteries, fuel, or other engines, whether or not designed primarily for use by individuals with mobility disabilities, that is used by individuals with mobility disabilities for the purpose of locomotion, including golf cars, electronic personal assistive mobility devices, or any mobility device designed to operate in areas without defined pedestrian routes, but that is not a wheelchair within the meaning of this section.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

The General Assembly passed legislation in 2020 (§ 46.2-904.1) to allow the use of class one and two electric power-assist bicycles where traditional bicycles are allowed. This code section also allows for the prohibition of class III electric assist bicycles on bicycle paths or multi-use paths. Amending this regulation would clarify what electric power-assist bicycle usage is allowed and prohibited on Department-owned lands.

A recent addition to the design of some bicycles is a small electric motor which provides an electric power-assist to the operation of the bicycle. Reducing the physical demand to operate a bicycle has expanded access to recreational opportunities, particularly to those with limitations stemming from age,

illness, disability or fitness, especially in more challenging environments, such as high altitudes or hilly terrain. These electric bicycles operate in the same manner as other types of bicycles and in many cases are virtually indistinguishable from other types of bicycles. The low power (750 watts) electric power-assist motors should not produce noise at levels that will disturb wildlife or interfere with other wildlife enthusiasts. Because these bicycles have similar frame and tire design, no substantial increase in road maintenance needs is expected.

As defined in 46.2-100, Class one and two electric power-assist bicycles have no more than three wheels, operable pedals, electric motors of 750 watts or less and a maximum speed of 20 miles per hour. Class three bicycles are capable of speeds up to 28 miles per hour. Because of the higher maximum speeds, class three bicycles are often prohibited from bicycle paths and multi-use paths. Although electric power-assist bicycle safety data are limited, at least one study concluded that injuries sustained by riders of class three bicycles are more severe than injuries sustained in class one and two or traditional bicycle incidents. The higher maximum speed could also reduce reaction time when encountering other users on multi-use paths. Because all DWR gated roads and barrier free trails are open to pedestrians and mobility devices, it is proposed that class three bicycles be prohibited on Department-owned lands.

4VAC15-20-150

Definitions and Miscellaneous: In General: Structures on department-owned lands and national forest lands.

Summary:

The proposal would establish a time-frame and duration for placing and leaving portable tree stands on department-owned lands.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-20-150. Structures on department-owned lands and national forest lands.

A. It shall be unlawful to construct, maintain or occupy any permanent structure, except by permit, on department-owned lands and national forest lands. This provision shall not apply to structures, stands or blinds provided by the department.

B. It shall be unlawful to maintain any temporary dwelling on department-owned lands for a period greater than 14 consecutive days. Any person constructing or occupying any temporary structure shall be responsible for complete removal of such structures when vacating the site.

C. It shall be unlawful to construct, maintain or occupy any tree stand on department-owned lands and national forest lands and on Department of Conservation and Recreation owned or controlled lands, provided that portable tree stands which are not permanently affixed may be used.

D. Portable tree stands which are not permanently affixed can be placed on department-owned lands on or after September 15th and must be removed on or prior to January 31st of the following calendar year. Tree stands will be considered abandoned and confiscated by the department if left on department-owned lands after January 31st.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

The popularity and convenience of portable tree stands (i.e. ladder stands, climbing stands, lock-on stands) and blinds for hunting purposes has led to a significant increase in their use on department-owned lands. Further, DWR staff have observed an increase in the number of portable tree stands placed and subsequently left remaining attached to the tree, without obvious maintenance, throughout the year. Subsection C of the existing regulation makes it clear that it is unlawful to construct and maintain permanent tree stands; yet, it does not fully address the use of portable tree stands that remain attached to trees beyond the hunting seasons.

It is assumed that most hunters that own these stands leave them in place during the off-season to reduce the work of removing them, making it convenient to once again utilize the stand the following season. When portable stands are left attached to trees and not maintained throughout the year, there are a number of potential human safety issues and resource impacts. Nylon straps used to secure ladder stands, lock-on stands, and associated ladders/climbing sticks degrade over time when exposed to the elements, compromising the integrity and function of the nylon material and creating a potentially unsafe situation. Further, the trees to which portable tree stands are affixed will continue to grow and expand, eventually growing around parts of stands, straps, and ladders that will ultimately cause damage to the trees.

Portable/temporary tree stand and blind regulations and rules for public lands among other agencies and states vary in specificity and language, but generally establish time-frames/durations for which a portable stand or blind can be placed and remain afield. On the George Washington-Jefferson National Forest, portable tree stands are permitted as long as they are not permanently affixed and do not cause resource damage (i.e., cutting limbs, placing nails or bolts into trees is prohibited), but leaving a tree stand unoccupied for an extended period of time is prohibited. In Pennsylvania, tree stands on state land can be placed not more than two weeks before the first day of the deer season and must be removed no later than two weeks after the final deer season in that area. Maryland requires that tree stands and blinds used for hunting purposes be removed at the end of each day.

4VAC15-20-151 (New)

Definitions and Miscellaneous: In General: Manipulation of vegetation on department-owned land

Summary:

The proposal is to (i) prohibit planting, manipulating, cutting, mutilating, destroying, or removing vegetation and (ii) prohibit the removal of minerals, artifacts, or other property from department-owned lands unless otherwise provided for in this regulation section.

Proposed language of Amendment:

4VAC15-20-151. Manipulation of vegetation on department-owned land.

- A. It shall be unlawful to plant, manipulate, cut, mutilate, destroy, or remove vegetation or to remove other minerals, artifacts or other property from agency owned lands.
- B. Nothing in this section will prohibit the gathering of mushrooms, berry picking or the collection of other fruits
- C. The use of down and dead trees and branches for use as fire wood while camping on a WMA shall be allowed by individuals with a valid camping permit issued by the Department.
- D. The Department may issue permits for the collection of fire wood under conditions and in locations determined by the Department
- E. Nothing in this section shall prohibit Department employees, contractors or permittees from engaging in agriculture, forestry, herbicide application, or other habitat restoration and manipulation for the purpose of enhancing wildlife habitat and populations

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

Establishing food plots is a popular method for enhancing opportunities to harvest game. This practice is commonly performed by individuals on private property and sometimes by professional wildlife managers on public lands. Instances of individuals cultivating agency property and establishing personal food plots on WMAs have been increasing. This destroys existing vegetation and may introduce undesirable species. Individuals who engage in these activities are not aware of the potential presence of sensitive natural and historic sites and may inadvertently disturb or damage these resources. Furthermore, these plantings are established to benefit individuals as opposed the public at large. The presence of these unauthorized plantings can alter animal's movements and behavior and be contrary to established Wildlife Management Area plans.

4VAC15-20-152 (New)

Definitions and Miscellaneous: In General: Target shooting on department-owned lands.

Summary:

The proposal is to expressly prohibit target shooting on department-owned and department-managed lands except on designated ranges.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-20-152. Target shooting on department-owned lands

It shall be unlawful to target shoot on any department-owned or department-managed lands, except at designated ranges. Target shooting is defined as the discharge of a firearm (as defined in § 18.2-308.2:2), muzzleloader (as defined in 4VAC15-50-71), or archery equipment (as defined in 4VAC15-40-20) for purposes other than hunting, trapping or self-defense. Nothing in this regulation will prohibit department employees in execution of their duties from training with department-issued firearms.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

Due to their often remote locations, the Department's Wildlife Management Areas and other properties are often used as locations for target shooting. This practice is currently prohibited by posted rule except at designated ranges but not specifically under regulation, creating issues with awareness and enforceability.

Unauthorized target shooting presents a hazard to users upon and neighbors to Department properties as shooters may not be using a proper backstop nor have awareness of what might exist downrange. Further, other users may be unaware of shooting activity and inadvertently enter into the line of fire. This activity differs from authorized hunting in the volume of fire and the fact that target shooters are not firing from an elevated position as are many hunters on a WMA. Hunting seasons are well defined and WMA users have an expectation that hunting activity is occurring during those time frames. Use of blaze orange or pink is required during certain seasons and is generally encouraged to create greater awareness and margin of safety. Properly licensed hunters have completed a hunter education course that emphasizes positive target identification and an appropriate backstop. In 2020 incidents related to target shooting on WMAs resulted in damage to private property and imminent threats to human safety.

Definitions & Miscellaneous Regulations

4VAC15-20-240

Definitions and Miscellaneous: In General: Use of drones for certain activities prohibited.

Summary:

This proposal is to modify the current unmanned aerial vehicles (drone/UAV) language to include a time restriction for use as related to hunting/scouting purposes.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-20-240. Use of drones for certain activities prohibited.

- A. Except as authorized by the Director or the director's designee, it shall be unlawful at any time for any person to use a drone or unmanned aircraft:
1. To hunt, take, or kill a wild animal or to drive or herd any wild animal for the purpose of hunting, trapping, or killing.
 2. ~~To attempt to locate, surveil, aid, or assist in the hunting of any wild animal.~~
 3. To harass any wild animal. For the purposes of this section, "harass" means any action that creates the likelihood of injury to wildlife by annoying it to such an extent as to significantly disrupt normal behavior patterns, which include breeding, feeding, or sheltering.
 4. On department-owned lands, except that department employees and contractors or agents acting on behalf of the department may use drones or other unmanned aircraft when addressing human safety, law enforcement, management, or other needs approved by the department.
- ~~Provided further, it shall be unlawful for any person to hunt or assist another to hunt on the same calendar day on a property after having used a drone or unmanned aircraft to locate or surveil any wild animal during any open season.~~
- B. No part of this section shall be construed to restrict the use of drones or other unmanned aircraft for wildlife management activities conducted or authorized by the department; by employees of the United States government or any of its agencies whose responsibility includes fisheries and wildlife management; or by county, city, or town animal control officers in the performance of their official duties.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

The unmanned aerial vehicles regulation was passed in 2019 without any time restrictions regarding usage during open hunting seasons. During deer committee discussions in 2021, law enforcement recommended adding a time component to this regulation to allow the use of drones when a person was not intending to go hunting within that calendar day. The addition of this time component (calendar day) now clarifies the intent of the original regulation.

General Regulations

4VAC15-40-220

Game: In General: Use of deadfalls prohibited; restricted use of snares.

Summary:

The proposal is to change the language defining the maximum permissible snare loop size from 12” in diameter to 38” in circumference.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-40-220. Use of deadfalls prohibited; restricted use of snares.

It shall be unlawful to trap, or attempt to trap, on land any wild bird or wild animal with any deadfall or snare; provided, that snares with loops no more than ~~12 inches in diameter~~ 38 inches in circumference and with the bottom of the snare loop set not to exceed 12 inches above ground level may be used with the written permission of the landowner. Snares with the top of the snare loop set higher than 12 inches above ground level must include a single-piece lock that is not power assisted, a cable stop that prevents the snare loop from closing smaller than 2-1/2 inches in diameter, and a break-away device that has been tested to break or disassemble at no more than 285 pounds pull.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

The current regulation that restricts the maximum snare loop size to a diameter of 12” can cause confusion when the loop is set in a shape that is not perfectly round. Although a snare may have a loop that measures 12” in diameter when round, it may hang in a teardrop shape when set in the field and measure more than 12” from top to bottom. By defining the maximum loop size as having a 38” circumference, this confusion can be eliminated since the circumference does not change when the loop shape is modified. This change does not increase snare loop size, since a snare with a 38” circumference has a loop diameter of 12” when set perfectly round. This regulation will help reduce confusion by trappers when setting snares in the field.

4VAC15-40-240
Game: In General: Animal population control.

Summary:

The proposal is to allow the Director to issue special permits to take game and fur-bearing animals for the purpose of population reduction in situations where existing statutory and regulatory options for population reduction are not applicable.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-40-240. Animal population control.

Whenever biological evidence suggests that populations of game animals or fur-bearing animals may exceed or threaten to exceed the carrying capacity of a specified range, or whenever population reduction of a species is necessary to manage for another wildlife species, or whenever the health or general condition of a species indicates the need for population reduction, or whenever the threat of human public health and safety or significant economic loss indicates the need for population reduction, the director is authorized to issue special permits to obtain the desired reduction by licensed hunters or licensed trappers on areas prescribed by department wildlife biologists. Further, in situations where existing statutory and regulatory options for population reduction are not applicable, the director is authorized to issue special permits to obtain the desired population reduction by individuals named within the director's authorization document. Designated game species or fur-bearing species may be taken in excess of the general bag limits, during closed seasons, with all legal methods outlined in the Code of Virginia or board regulation, and with any type of lawful weapon, as defined in § 29.1-519 of the Code of Virginia and in board regulation, on special permits issued under this section under such conditions as may be prescribed by the director.

Staff Final Recommendation – Staff recommends adoption of the amendments as final in the form they were proposed.

Rationale:

Over the past decade, Department staffs have encountered instances of property owners experiencing conflicts with overabundant game and furbearer populations, but where existing legal mechanisms to address the situation were not applicable. This proposal would amend the animal population control regulation to allow special permits to be issued to address these very unique management situations. As envisioned, this amendment would not result in the creation of a formal program but would be handled on a case by case basis as these limited situation arose.

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

MAY 2021

DISEASE MANAGEMENT AREA 3 (DMA₃)

Regulation Amendment Recommendations



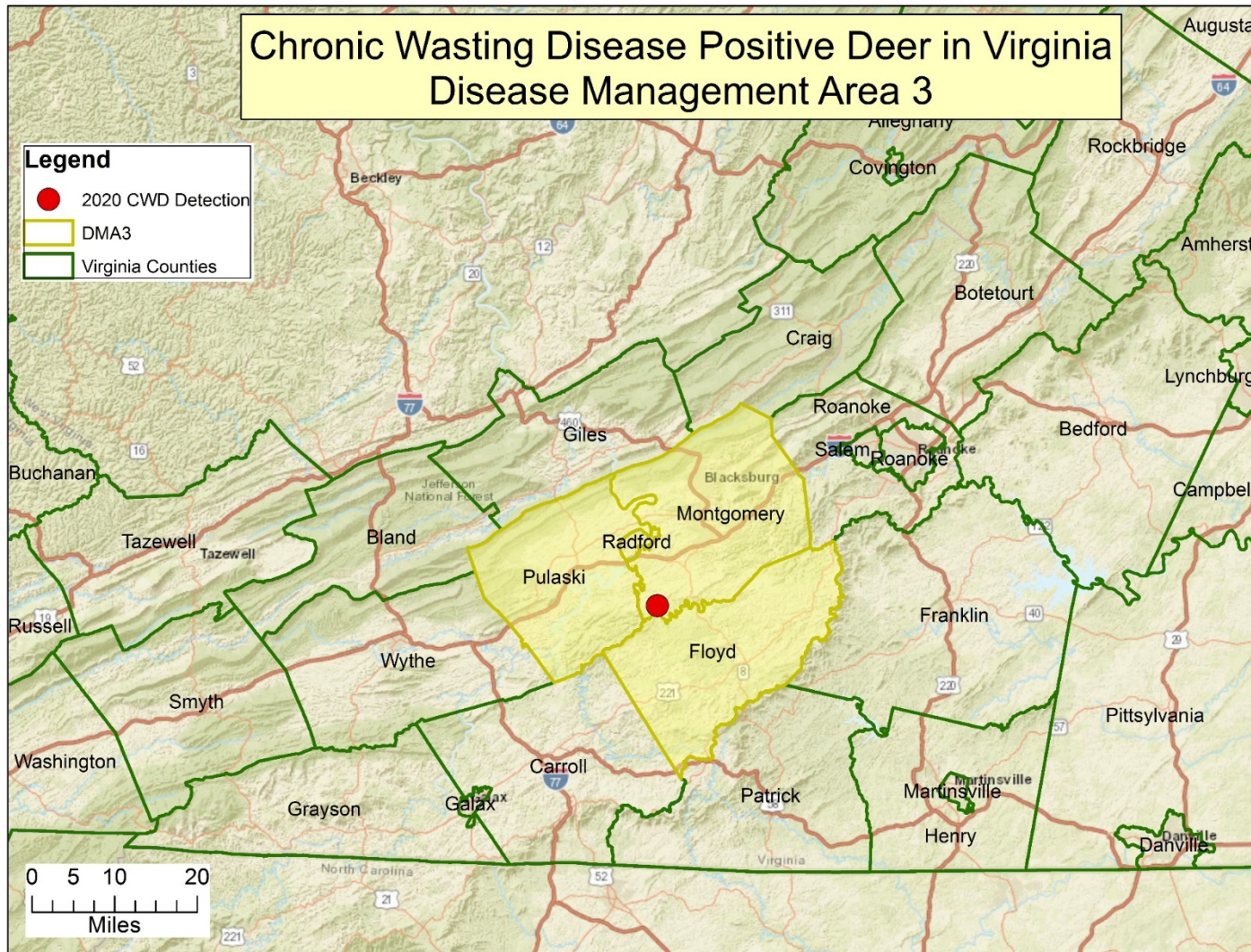
CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

Montgomery Co. CWD – Quick Facts

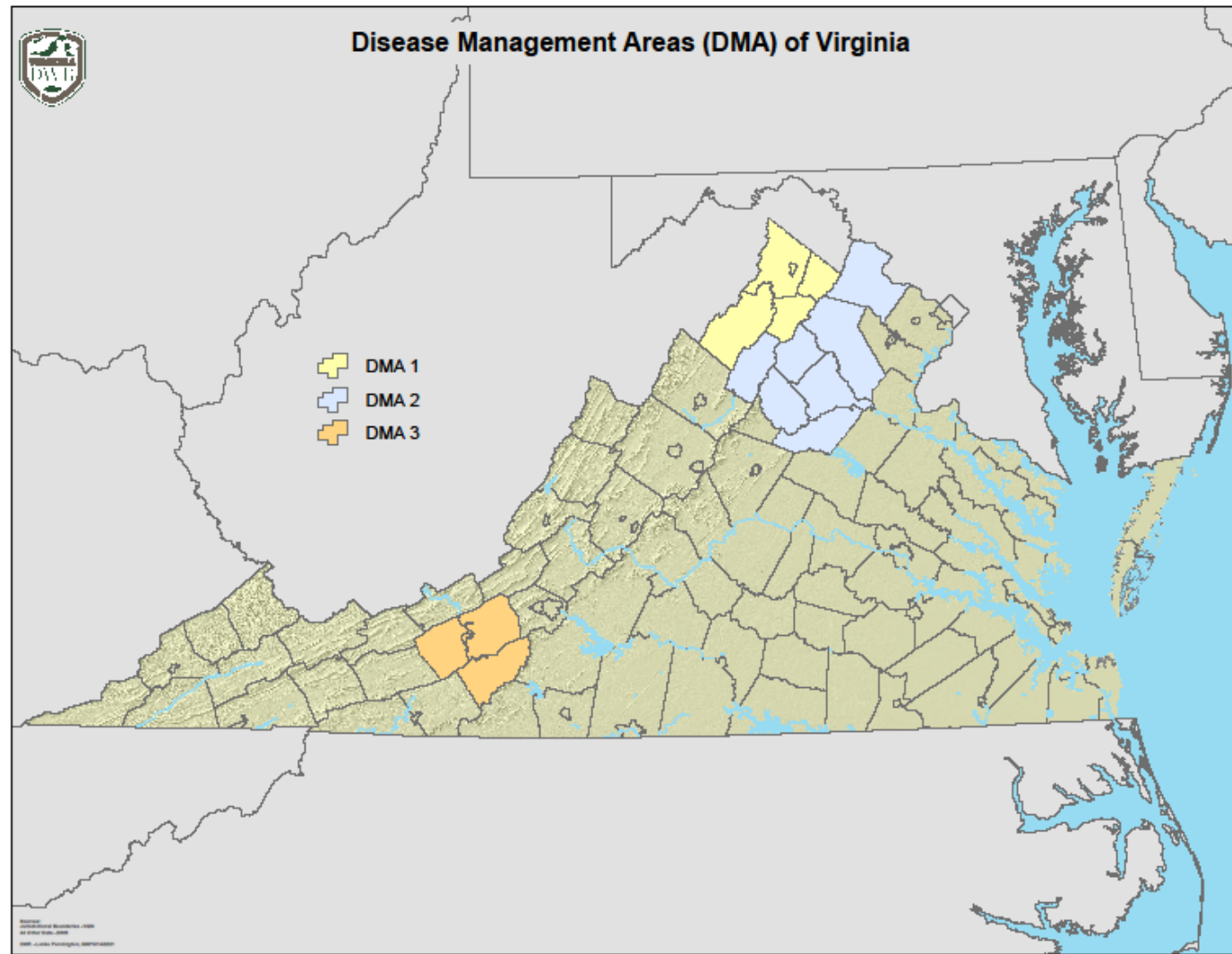
- 2½ year old buck taken by hunter in southwest Montgomery County
- Sample originated from Statewide Taxidermist CWD Surveillance Program
- Confirmatory CWD testing was conducted on original lymph node sample
- DWR Law Enforcement worked with hunter to confirm identification of suspect deer, collect DNA sample from the deer, and confirm harvest location
- DNA testing conducted to confirm match between lymph node sample and sample collected by CPO from suspect deer



Disease Management Area 3



CWD Disease Management Areas



Surveillance & Testing Actions – DMA3

Extensive surveillance planned within DMA3 and surrounding counties

- Mandatory CWD Sampling Stations
November 13th (opening day of firearms season)
- Voluntary CWD Testing Drop-Off Locations
- Local Deer Processors and Taxidermists
- Roadkills



Regulatory Actions Automatically Effective in DMA3

- **Prohibition on fawn rehabilitation**
- **Restricted transport of deer carcasses and high-risk carcass parts**
- **Year-round prohibition on feeding deer in counties within 25 miles of the CWD positive location:**

Bland

Craig

Franklin

Montgomery

Pulaski

Wythe

Carroll

Floyd

Giles

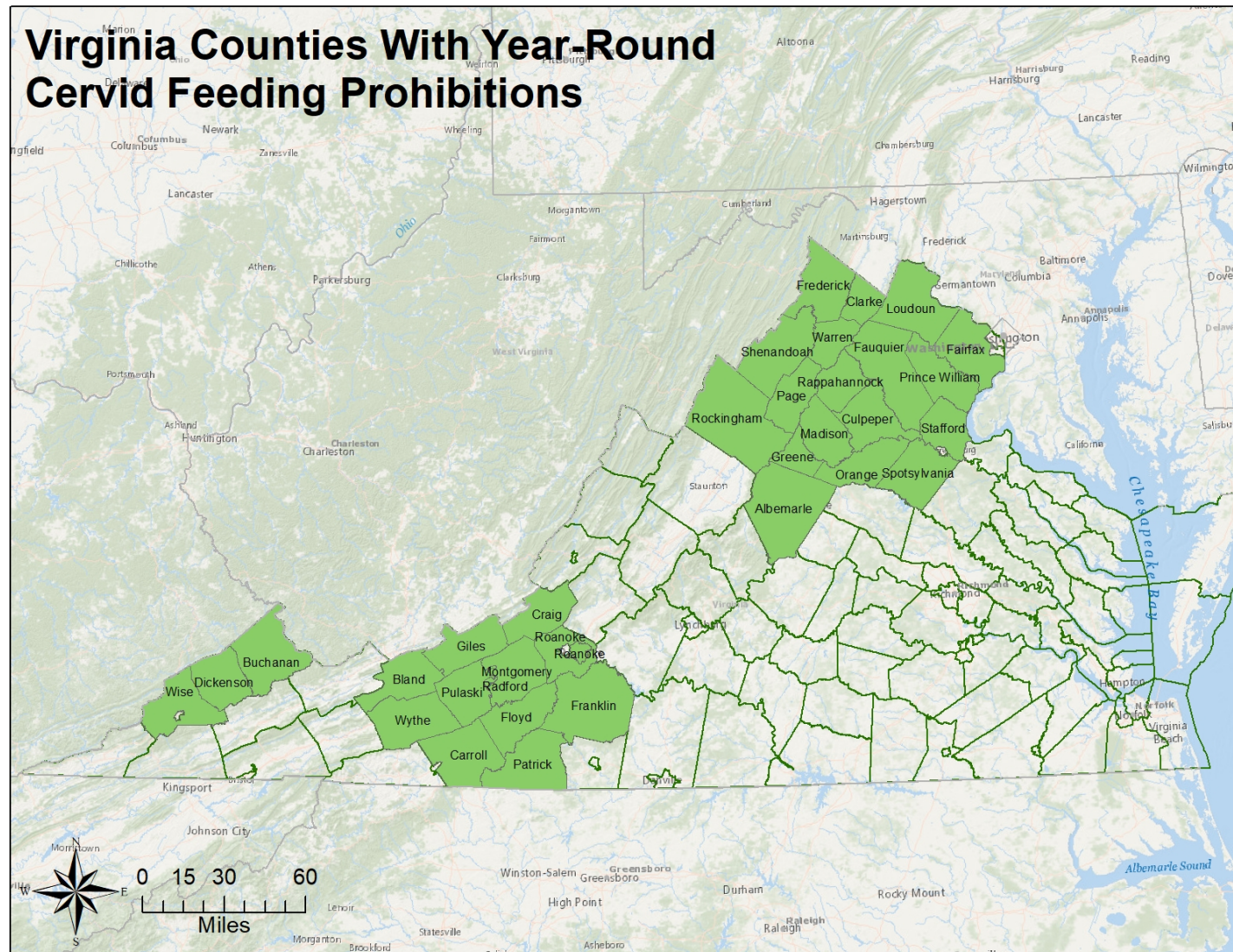
Patrick

Roanoke

Cities of Radford, Roanoke, and Salem



Year-Round Cervid Feeding Prohibited



Regulation Amendment **Recommendations**

4VAC15-90-10. Open Season; generally.

- Extend the General Firearms season from 2-weeks to 4-weeks on non-National Forest lands in Montgomery and Pulaski counties
- Allow for the establishment of “disease focus zones” around CWD positive locations in Floyd, Montgomery, and Pulaski counties

4VAC15-90-290. Special quality deer management areas.

- Repeal this regulation which establishes a special quality deer management area with associated antler point restrictions on Fairystone Wildlife Management Area and adjoining public lands



Next Steps

- 1. Recommend the Board propose these regulations – motion provided**
- 2. Conduct a public comment period over the summer months**
- 3. Bring proposals back to Wildlife & Boat Committee and Board in August for final action**
- 4. Effective date of August 31, 2021 for implementation this fall**



Questions



Chronic Wasting Disease – DMA₃

Motion

I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources propose the amendments to the chronic wasting disease regulations for Disease Management Area 3 as presented by staff.



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES



DISEASE MANAGEMENT AREA 3

CWD PRELIMINARY REGULATION RECOMMENDATIONS

May 2021

4VAC15-90-10
Game: Deer: Open season; generally.

Summary:

The recommendation is to allow (i) an early September antlerless only firearms deer season and a late (January through March) antlerless only firearms deer season in designated disease focus zones in Floyd, Montgomery, and Pulaski counties, and (ii) extend the general firearms season on non-national forest lands in Montgomery and Pulaski counties from two to four weeks.

Recommended language of amendment:

4VAC15-90-10. Open season; generally.

- A. It shall be lawful to hunt deer in the following localities, including the cities and towns therein, during the following seasons, all dates inclusive.

Locality	Season
Accomack County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Albemarle County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Alleghany County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Amelia County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Amherst County (west of Business U.S. 29 from the James River to its intersection with U.S. 29 just south of the Town of Amherst continuing north on U.S. 29 to the Tye River, except on national forest lands)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 28 consecutive days following
Amherst County (national forest lands)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Amherst County (east of Business U.S. 29, as defined above)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Appomattox County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Arlington County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Arlington County (antlerless deer only)	First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March
Augusta County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Bath County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Bedford County (except on national forest lands)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 28 consecutive days following
Bedford County (national forest lands)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Bland County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following

Botetourt County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Brunswick County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Buchanan County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Buckingham County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Campbell County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Caroline County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Carroll County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Charles City County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Charlotte County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Chesapeake (City of)	October 1 through November 30
Chesterfield County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Clarke County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
<u>Clarke County (antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March</u>
Craig County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Culpeper County (except Chester F. Phelps Wildlife Management Area)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Culpeper County (Chester F. Phelps Wildlife Management Area)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
<u>Culpeper County (private lands and antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October</u>

<u>Culpeper County (disease focus zones defined by the Department, antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March</u>
Cumberland County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Dickenson County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Dinwiddie County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Essex County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Fairfax County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Fairfax County (antlerless deer only)	First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March
Fauquier County (except Chester F. Phelps Wildlife Management Area)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Fauquier County (Chester F. Phelps Wildlife Management Area)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
<u>Fauquier County (private lands and antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October</u>
<u>Fauquier County (disease focus zones defined by the Department, antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March</u>
Floyd County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 28 consecutive days following
<u>Floyd County (disease focus zones defined by the Department, antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March</u>
Fluvanna County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Franklin County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 28 consecutive days following
Frederick County (non-national forest lands)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January

Frederick County (national forest lands)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
<u>Frederick County (non-national-forest lands antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March</u>
Giles County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Gloucester County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Goochland County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Grayson County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Greene County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Greensville County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Halifax County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Hanover County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Henrico County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Henry County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 28 consecutive days following
Highland County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Isle of Wight County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
James City County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
King and Queen County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
King George County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January

King William County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Lancaster County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Lee County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Loudoun County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Loudoun County (antlerless deer only)	First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March
Louisa County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Lunenburg County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Madison County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
<u>Madison County (private lands and antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October</u>
<u>Madison County (disease focus zones defined by the Department, antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March</u>
Mathews County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Mecklenburg County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Middlesex County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Montgomery County (<u>non-national forest lands</u>)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 <u>28</u> consecutive days following
<u>Montgomery County (national forest lands)</u>	<u>Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following</u>
<u>Montgomery County (disease focus zones defined by the Department, antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March</u>

Nelson County (west of Route 151, except on national forest lands)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 28 consecutive days following
Nelson County (national forest lands)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Nelson County (east of Route 151)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
New Kent County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Northampton County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Northumberland County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Nottoway County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Orange County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
<u>Orange County (private lands and antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October</u>
<u>Orange County (disease focus zones defined by the Department, antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March</u>
Page County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
<u>Page County (disease focus zones defined by the Department, antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March</u>
Patrick County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 28 consecutive days following
Pittsylvania County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Powhatan County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Prince Edward County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Prince George County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January

Prince William County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Prince William County (antlerless deer only)	First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March
Pulaski County (except on New River Unit of the Radford Army Ammunition Plant adjacent to the Town of Dublin and national forest lands)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 28 consecutive days following
Pulaski County (New River Unit of the Radford Army Ammunition Plant adjacent to the Town of Dublin)	Saturday prior to the second Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Pulaski County (national forest lands)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Pulaski County (disease focus zones defined by the Department, antlerless deer only)	First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March
Rappahannock County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Rappahannock County (private lands and antlerless deer only)	First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October
Rappahannock County (disease focus zones defined by the Department, antlerless deer only)	First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March
Richmond County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Roanoke County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Rockbridge County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Rockingham County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Russell County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Scott County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following

Shenandoah County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
<u>Shenandoah County (non-national forest lands antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March</u>
Smyth County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Southampton County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Spotsylvania County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Stafford County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Suffolk (City of) (east of Dismal Swamp Line)	October 1 through November 30
Suffolk (City of) (west of Dismal Swamp Line)	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Surry County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Sussex County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Tazewell County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Virginia Beach (City of)	October 1 through November 30
Warren County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
<u>Warren (non-national forest lands antlerless deer only)</u>	<u>First Saturday in September through the Friday prior to the first Saturday in October and the Sunday following the first Saturday in January through the last Sunday in March</u>
Washington County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
Westmoreland County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January
Wise County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following

Wythe County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following
York County	Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January

B. Except as provided in subsection A of this section, east of the Blue Ridge Mountains deer may be hunted from the Saturday prior to the third Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive, within the incorporated limits of any city or town that allows deer hunting.

C. Except as provided in subsection A of this section, west of the Blue Ridge Mountains deer may be hunted from the Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 consecutive days following within the incorporated limits of any city or town that allows deer hunting.

Rationale:

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) was confirmed in Montgomery County at the conclusion of the 2020 – 2021 deer hunting season. In response to this detection, Disease Management Area 3 (DMA3) was created and includes Floyd, Montgomery, and Pulaski counties. The addition of two weeks of general firearms season in Montgomery and Pulaski counties will bring these counties into alignment with Floyd County. This two-week extension of the general firearms season aims to achieve three goals: 1. Slow the spread and transmission of CWD, 2. Reduce deer populations to meet objectives in these two counties, and 3. Create consistent general firearms seasons in all DMA3 counties, thereby streamlining hunting regulations for these counties and minimizing confusion for hunters.

Recommendations relative to Disease Focus Zones (DFZ) will enable the Department to target additional harvest management approaches around new CWD detections as they are discovered. To be proactive, this proposal includes counties within the DMA where CWD has not been detected (e.g., Floyd, Pulaski). DFZs are defined as a local expansion of antlerless hunting opportunities in a focused area around an outlier CWD detection, which is located more than 5 miles from the nearest detection. DFZs will be defined using clear geographic boundaries and communicated before hunting season through the annual hunting and trapping booklet and on the Department’s website. The goals of expanded antlerless hunting opportunities in a DFZ are to slow disease transmission in the immediate vicinity of a detection and to increase testing opportunities for deer harvested in close vicinity to an outlier CWD detection.

4VAC15-90-290

Game: Deer: Special quality deer management areas.

Summary:

The recommendation is to repeal this regulation as Chronic Wasting Disease has been discovered within 25 miles of the special Fairystone quality deer management area.

Recommended language of amendment:

~~4VAC15-90-290. Special quality deer management areas.~~

~~A. The board hereby designates the following areas posted by the Department of Wildlife Resources as special quality deer management areas with special antlered buck harvest.~~

~~B. Special Fairystone quality deer management area. It shall be unlawful to kill an antlered deer on the special Fairystone quality deer management area unless the deer has at least four antler points, each greater than one inch in length, on either the right or left antler.~~

Rationale:

Antler point restrictions are designed to encourage an older male age structure within a local deer herd. However, data from across the eastern U.S. clearly shows that CWD infection rates are the highest in older male age classes. During the 2019-2020 Wildlife Regulation Review and Amendment process, in order to reduce the risk of CWD transmission in deer populations where CWD has been confirmed, the Board of Wildlife Resources adopted a regulation amendment that prohibited the application of antler point restrictions in any county within 25 miles of a confirmed CWD positive location (4VAC15-90-290). Patrick County, which includes the Fairystone quality deer management area and its associated antler point restriction, is located within 25 miles of the recent CWD detection in Montgomery County. Removal of this special quality deer management area is therefore recommended.

PREDATOR HUNTING CONTEST INFORMATION PRESENTATION

DWR BOARD MEETING
MAY 27, 2021



CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

WHAT IS A PREDATOR HUNTING CONTEST?

Also referred to as “calling contests” or “killing contests”, these events are organized, competitive contests in which participants compete for cash or other prizes for killing animals in a specified location during a specific time period.

- Usually 3-day event (2 nights and weigh in)
- 2-3 person teams
- Electronic calls and night vision typically used
- Species hunted include coyotes, bobcats, and foxes (both red and gray)
- Prizes for most killed, largest killed, and sometimes smallest killed for each species, and pooled kill for all species



HOW DO THEY DIFFER FROM OTHER TYPES OF CONTESTS?

- Most other types of hunting-related contests involve animals with daily bag limits and do not provide prizes for the most animals killed
- Deer entered in “big buck” contests are harvested consistent with ordinary hunting practices, bag limits, and seasons. Recognition is given for a special or unique individual animal, not the most killed.
- Fishing tournaments are usually “catch and release” events restricted to certain water bodies with size and bag limits. In some tournaments, competitors are even penalized for dead fish.



PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF PREDATOR HUNTING CONTESTS

- Viewed by some as making a game of killing wildlife, devaluing animal lives and demonstrating disrespect for wildlife
- Also perceived as killing for money without a legitimate use of harvested animals

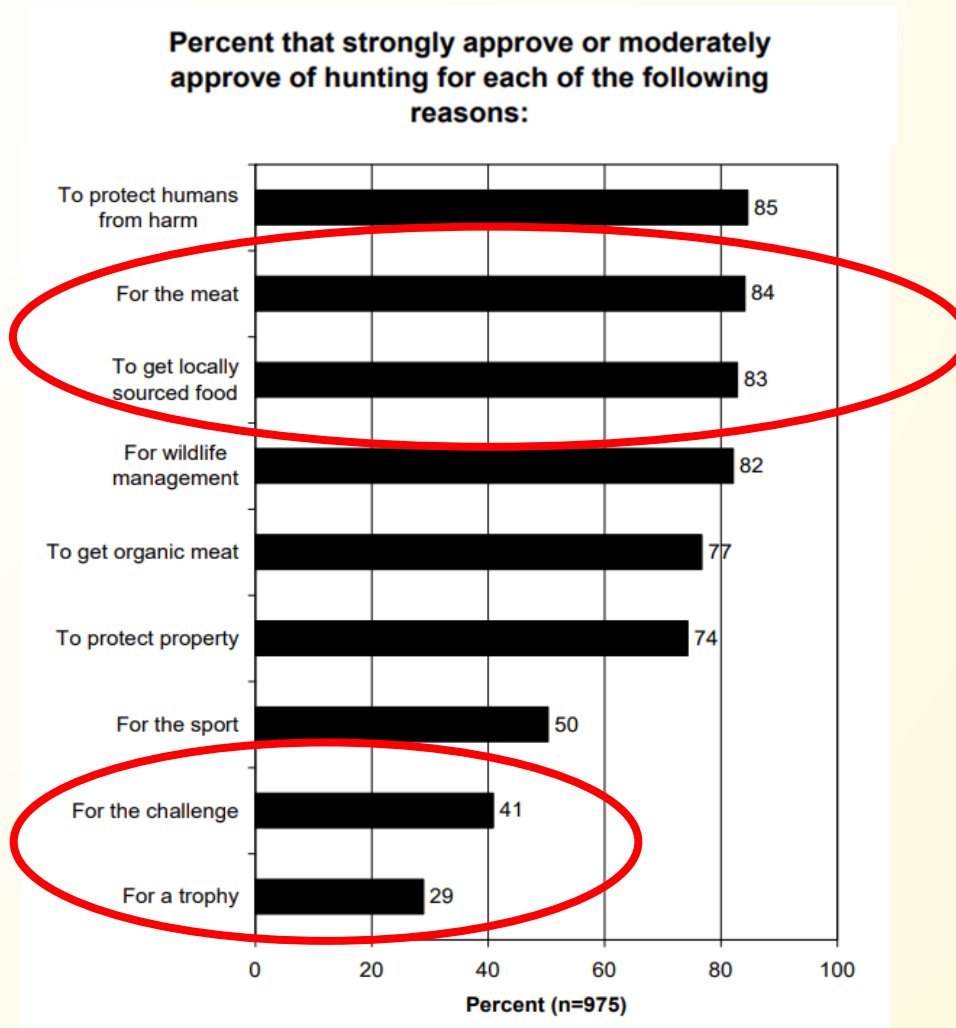


SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS CONTRIBUTE TO POOR PUBLIC IMAGE

- Photos and inappropriate social media posts negatively affect public's view of hunting in general



MOTIVATION FOR HUNTING AFFECTS PUBLIC SUPPORT



No data specific to contest hunting, but expected public support would be less than for trophy hunting

American Attitudes Towards Hunting, Fishing, Sport Shooting, and Trapping 2019 – NSSF Report



PRIMARY CONCERN OF STAFF IS POSSIBLE NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON PUBLIC VIEWS OF HUNTING IN GENERAL



Issue Statement

Wildlife Killing Contests

Wildlife killing contests are organized, competitive contests where participants compete for cash or other prizes for killing animals in a specified location during a specific time period. They are conducted on a wide range of species including coyotes, bobcats, foxes, raccoons, crows, wolves, and prairie dogs. Management of these contests by state and provincial wildlife agencies varies widely. Each state or province, even ones adjacent to each other with similar demographics, can have very different regulations and agency approaches. The public at large may often be unaware that these events take place.

When informed about killing contests, a segment of the public, including hunters and groups seeking ethical hunting and humane treatment of wildlife, find these contests offensive. Pictures and disturbing language posted on social media or other electronic communications can further negative perceptions about hunting. Because of controversy around killing contests, some jurisdictions have sought to limit or ban such killing contests. As of 2019, one state legislature has banned killing contests, some state wildlife agencies have banned them, other state agencies require permits or other special conditions to conduct them, and some states currently support killing contests for some species on the basis that removing predators improves prey populations.

Killing contests differ from typical regulated hunting by the very nature of the organized public competition and prizes being given specifically for killing the largest, smallest, or most animals. "Big Buck" pools or organized record books differ from killing contests because the animals recognized in these competitions are harvested consistent with ordinary and generally accepted hunting practices and then introduced to the competition.

TWS ISSUE STATEMENT – APPROVED MARCH 7, 2019

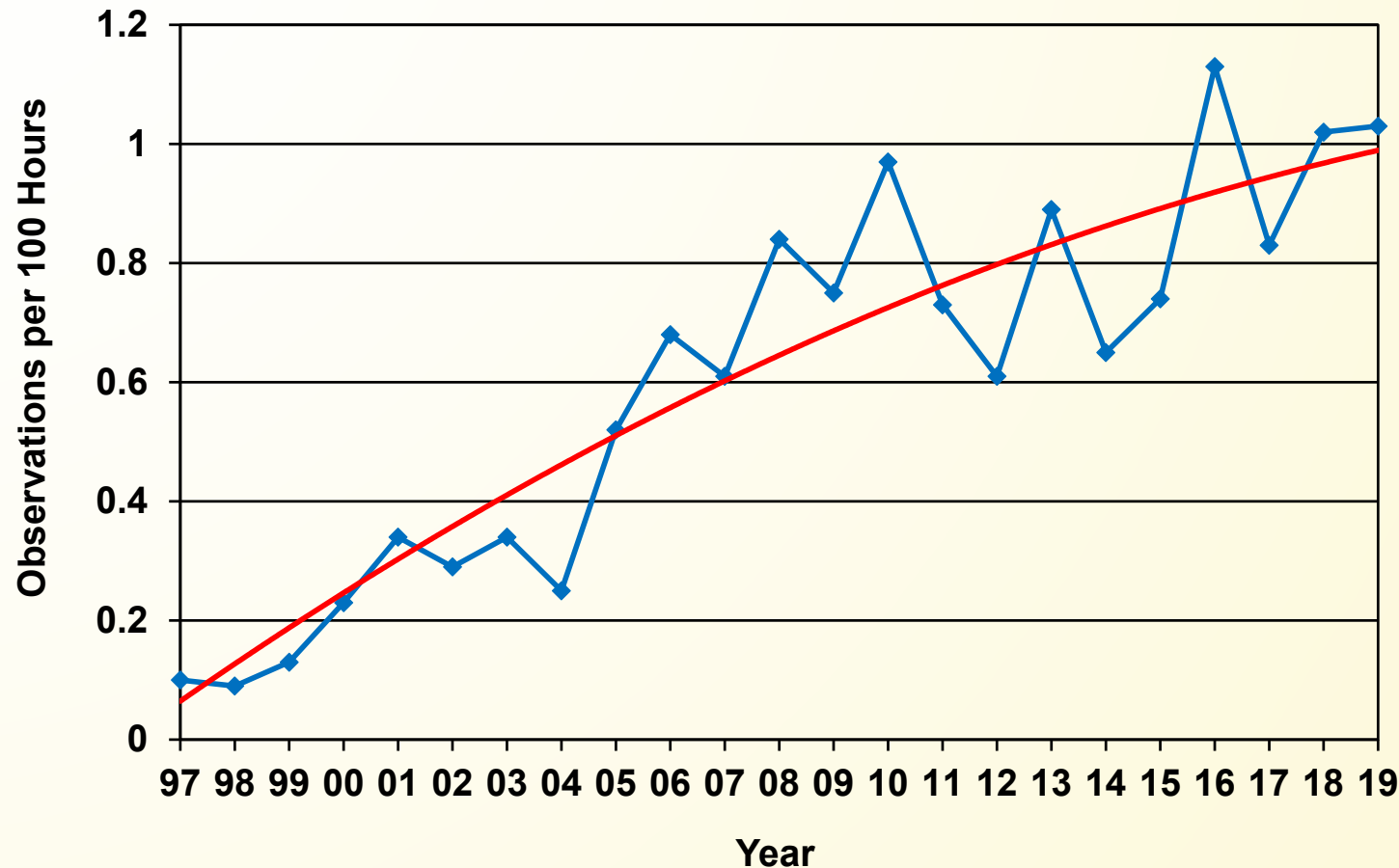


SUPPORT FOR PREDATOR HUNTING CONTESTS

- Support by hunters and other segments of public is usually based on the misconception that predator killing contests provide benefits to the public and other wildlife species
- Proponents frequently claim that contests help control predator numbers (particularly coyotes), thereby reducing livestock damage, increasing survival of game species (deer, turkey, quail, etc.), and reducing attacks on pets and people



COYOTE POPULATIONS TRENDS IN VIRGINIA



Continuous open hunting
and trapping seasons

Day and night hunting
allowed

Lights, infrared, night
vision, and electronic calls
legal

Can be hunted over bait

Data from Virginia Bowhunter Survey 1997-2019



EFFECTS OF HARVEST ON COYOTE POPULATIONS

- Trend data suggests no significant effects of hunting and trapping on coyote populations at the landscape level, despite liberal harvest regulations
- Predator harvest associated with contests (some of which is outside of Virginia) is small fraction within the context of overall hunting and trapping mortality
 - 21,435 coyotes killed by hunters (2015-16 Hunter Survey)
 - 4,304 coyotes harvested by trapper (2019-20 Trapper Survey)
- No scientific evidence to support claims that predator hunting contests reduce predator numbers, reduce livestock damage, or increase populations of game species (possible exception on heavily hunted individual farms)



MISCONCEPTIONS PROVIDED BY CONTEST OPPONENTS

- Predator hunting contests are a blood sport akin to dog fighting and cock fighting

Predator hunting contests are currently legal in Virginia and all applicable laws and regulations are being followed

- Countless numbers of animals are orphaned as a result of these contests

Contests are generally conducted during the fall and winter months when young are no longer dependent on adults



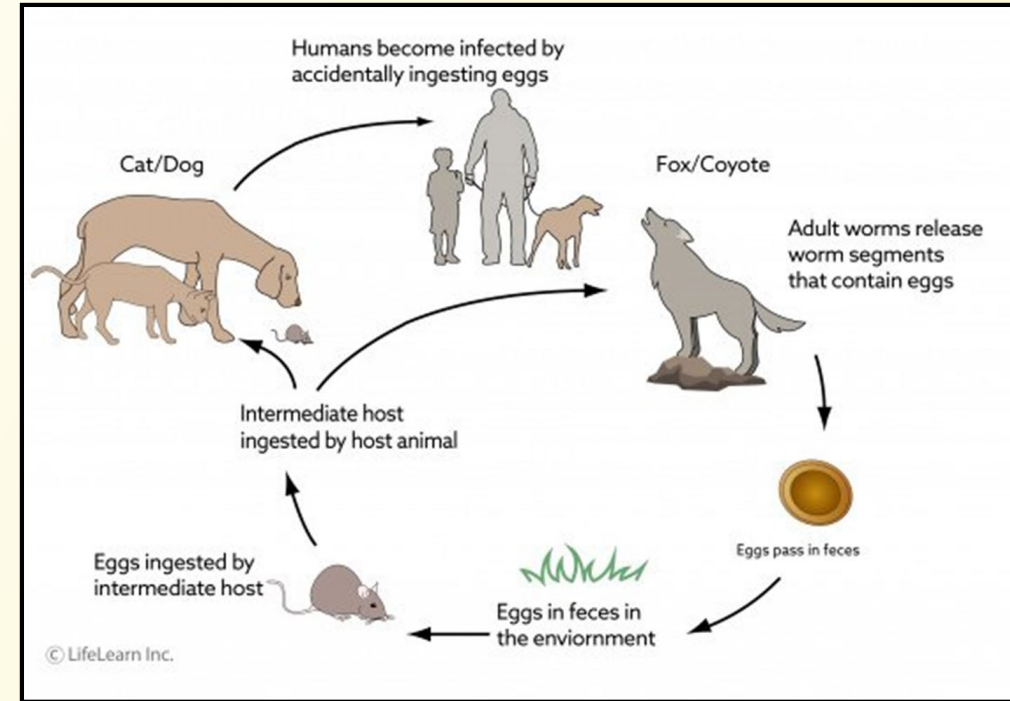
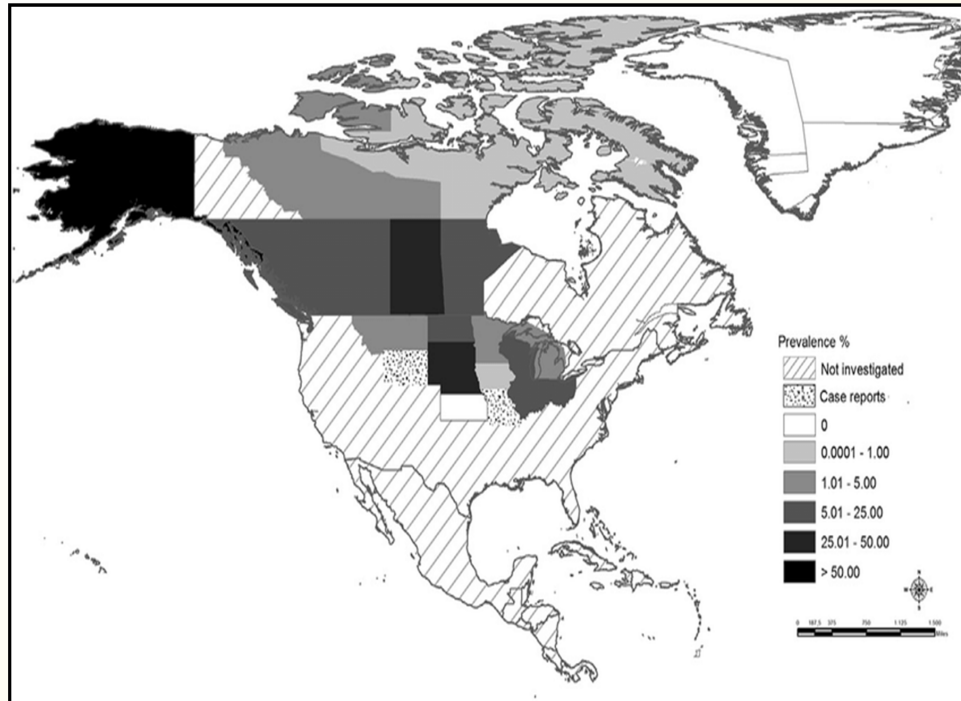
PREDATOR HUNTING CONTESTS IN VIRGINIA

- At least 18 predator hunting contests in Virginia from 2015-2021 (4 in 2021)
- Large multi-state contest hosted in Virginia in 2017, 2018, and 2020
 - Open to participants in 26 states east of the Mississippi River
 - 2020 statistics: 213 teams, 569 coyotes, ~300 foxes, > \$20,000 cash & prizes
 - Cancelled in 2021 (COVID), 2022 contest planned for Jan. 2022 in Wytheville, VA



ALSO HAVE CONCERNS RELATED TO SPREAD OF TAPEWORM

Echinococcus multilocularis



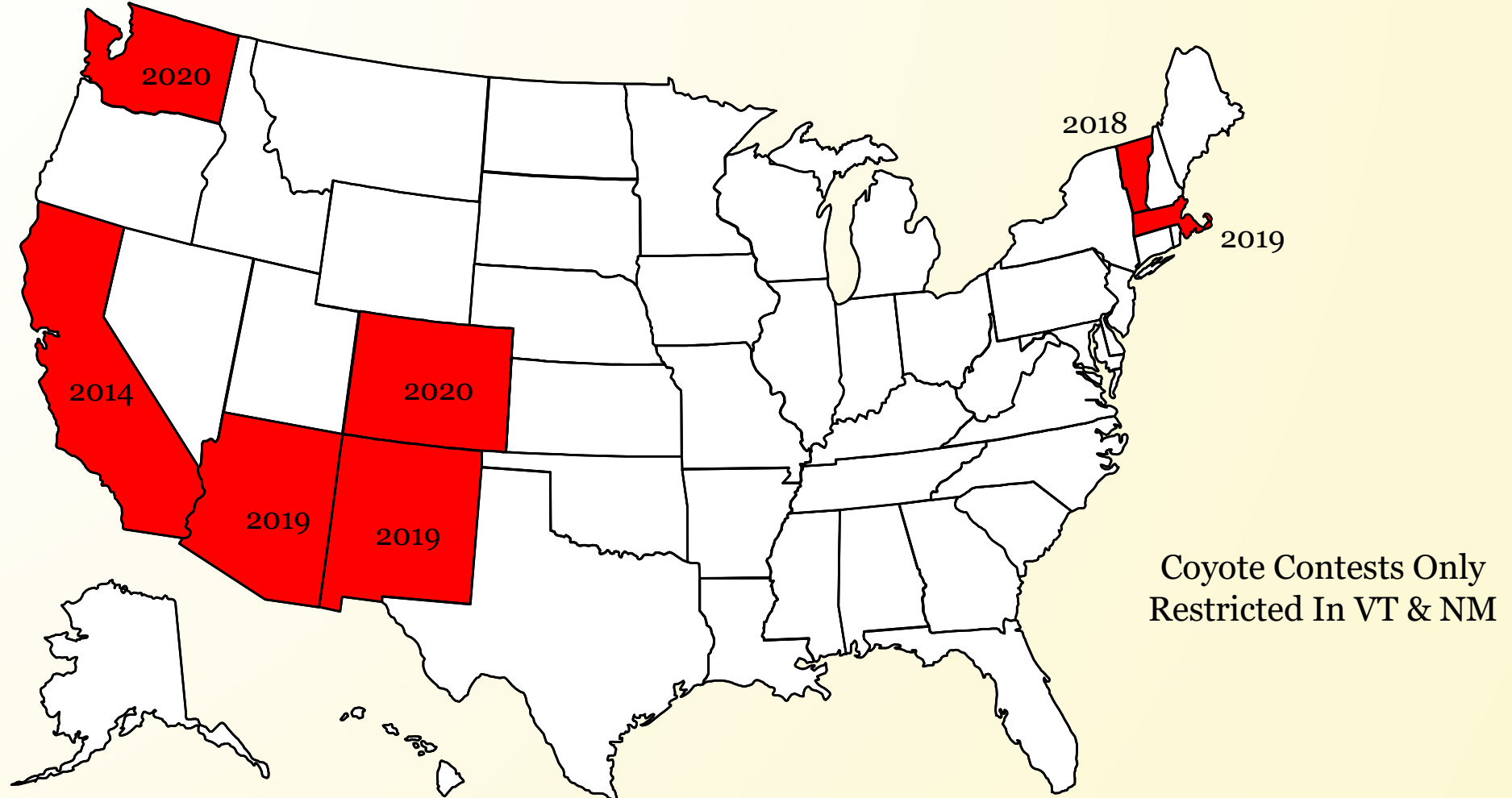
- Small tapeworm with health implications for humans and their pets (can be fatal)
- Definitive hosts are foxes and coyotes, intermediate hosts are small mammals
- In U.S., range was mostly Northcentral and Midwestern states, east to Ohio (until 2018)

***Echinococcus multilocularis* IN VIRGINIA**

- First case in Virginia was reported in domestic dog in Clarke County in 2018 with no travel history (1st case of *E. multi* in Atlantic Seaboard states)
- Subsequent surveillance efforts detected *E. multi* in road-killed red fox from Clarke County in 2020 and wild red fox from Loudon County in 2021.
- DWR desires to minimize opportunity for spread of *E. multi* in Virginia
- Eggs in GI tract of dead coyote or fox could remain infective for months after death, especially in winter
- Improper disposal of coyote and fox carcasses from certain Midwest and Northcentral states could facilitate spread of *E. multi* to new areas in Virginia



7 STATES WITH RESTRICTIONS ON PREDATOR HUNTING CONTESTS



SIMILAR CONCERNS EXPRESSED IN SOME OTHER STATES

“Coyote hunting contests are not only ineffective at controlling coyote populations, but these kinds of competitive coyote hunts are raising concerns on the part of the public and could possibly jeopardize the future of hunting and affect access to private lands for all hunters.”

Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department – January 2017

“Public controversy over this issue has the potential to threaten predator hunting and undermine public support for hunting in general.”

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife – July 2019



QUESTIONS?



RECOMMENDED LANGUAGE

4VAC15-20-260 (New)

Summary:

The recommendation is to prohibit hunting contests for coyotes and furbearer species in which participants are offered cash, prizes or other inducements.

Recommended language of amendment:

4VAC15-20-260. Coyote and furbearer hunting contests.

It shall be unlawful to organize, sponsor, promote, conduct, participate, or solicit participation in a contest or organized competition in which participants are offered cash, prizes, or other inducements [of monetary value] for capturing or killing coyotes or fur-bearing animals defined in § 29.1-100. No part of this regulation shall be construed to restrict coyote bounties authorized in § 15.2-926.1.



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES



**PRELIMINARY REGULATION RECOMMENDATION
ON PREDATOR HUNTING CONTESTS FROM MARCH
2021 FOR WHICH ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WAS
REQUESTED BY THE BOARD OF WILDLIFE
RESOURCES**

May 2021

4VAC15-20-260 (New)

Definitions and Miscellaneous: In General: Coyote and furbearer hunting contests.

Summary:

The recommendation is to prohibit hunting contests for coyotes and furbearer species in which participants are offered cash, prizes or other inducements.

Recommended language of amendment:

4VAC15-20-260. Coyote and furbearer hunting contests.

It shall be unlawful to organize, sponsor, promote, conduct, participate, or solicit participation in a contest or organized competition in which participants are offered cash, prizes, or other inducements [of monetary value] for capturing or killing coyotes or fur-bearing animals defined in § 29.1-100. No part of this regulation shall be construed to restrict coyote bounties authorized in § 15.2-926.1.

Rationale:

Competitive hunts that offer prizes for killing coyotes and furbearer species are controversial and have been prohibited or restricted in five other states. In recent years, there have been numerous predator hunting competition events hosted in Virginia, including several large regional contests with animals transported into Virginia from other states. Although most hunters support the idea of predator hunting contests, some members of the public oppose competition events, especially when large numbers of predators are killed and harvested animals are perceived as not being utilized appropriately. Due to these beliefs and perceptions, some wildlife professionals have expressed concern that negative attitudes associated with these contests may undermine public support for hunting in general. The Department is also concerned that improper disposal of out-of-state carcasses could facilitate the spread of the parasite *Echinococcus multilocularis*, a small tapeworm that has potential human health implications and is much more common in foxes and coyotes in some other states.

DWR Finance, Audit, and Compliance Meeting

May 20, 2021



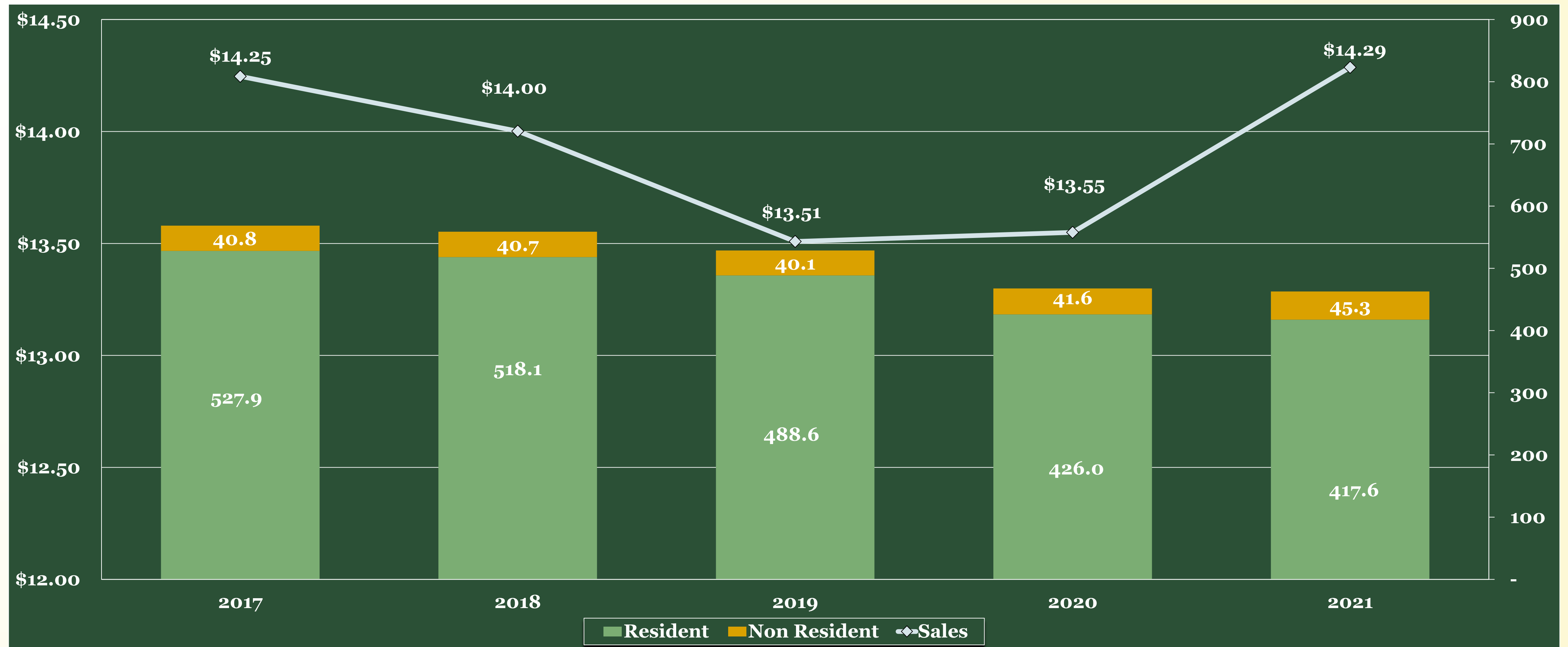


Financial Report as of 30 Apr 2021



FY17-21 Sales Comparison - Hunting

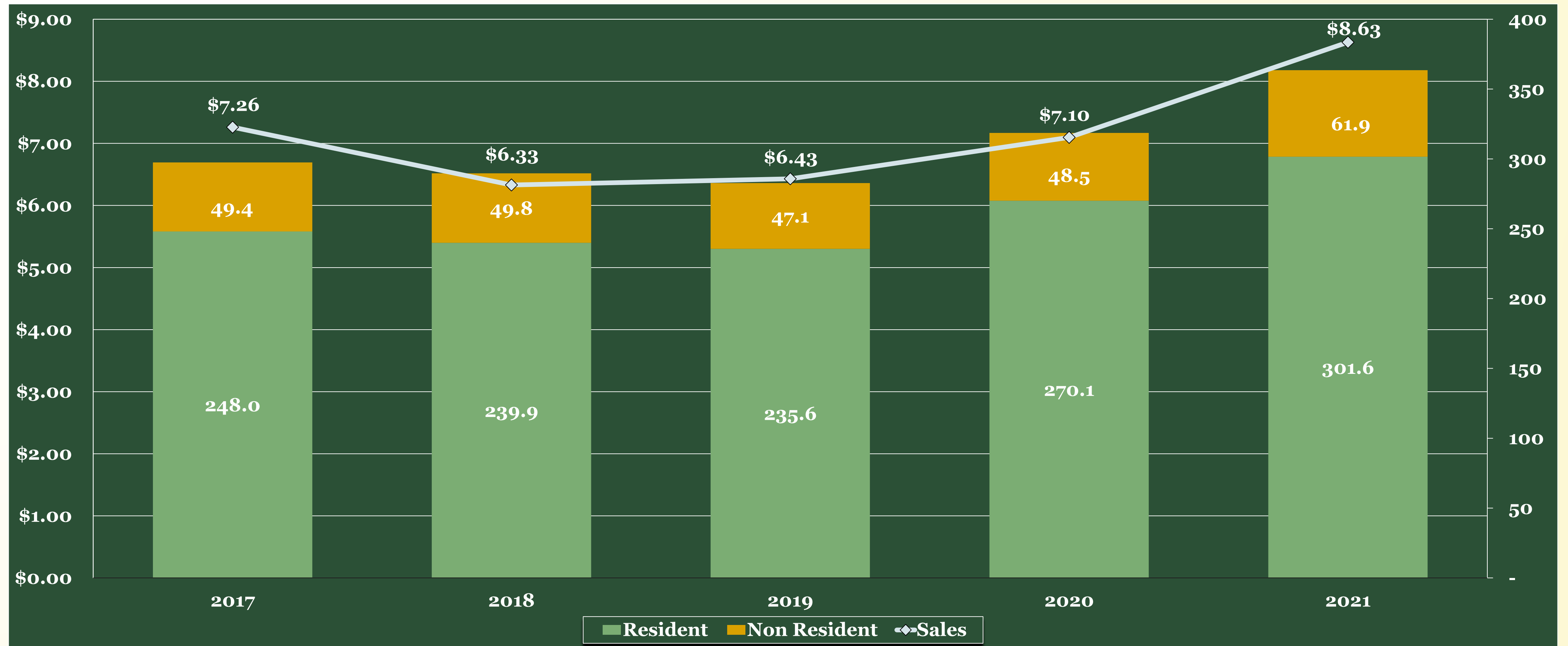
Jul 1 – Apr 30



\$ In Millions
License Sold In Thousands

FY17-21 Sales Comparison - Fishing

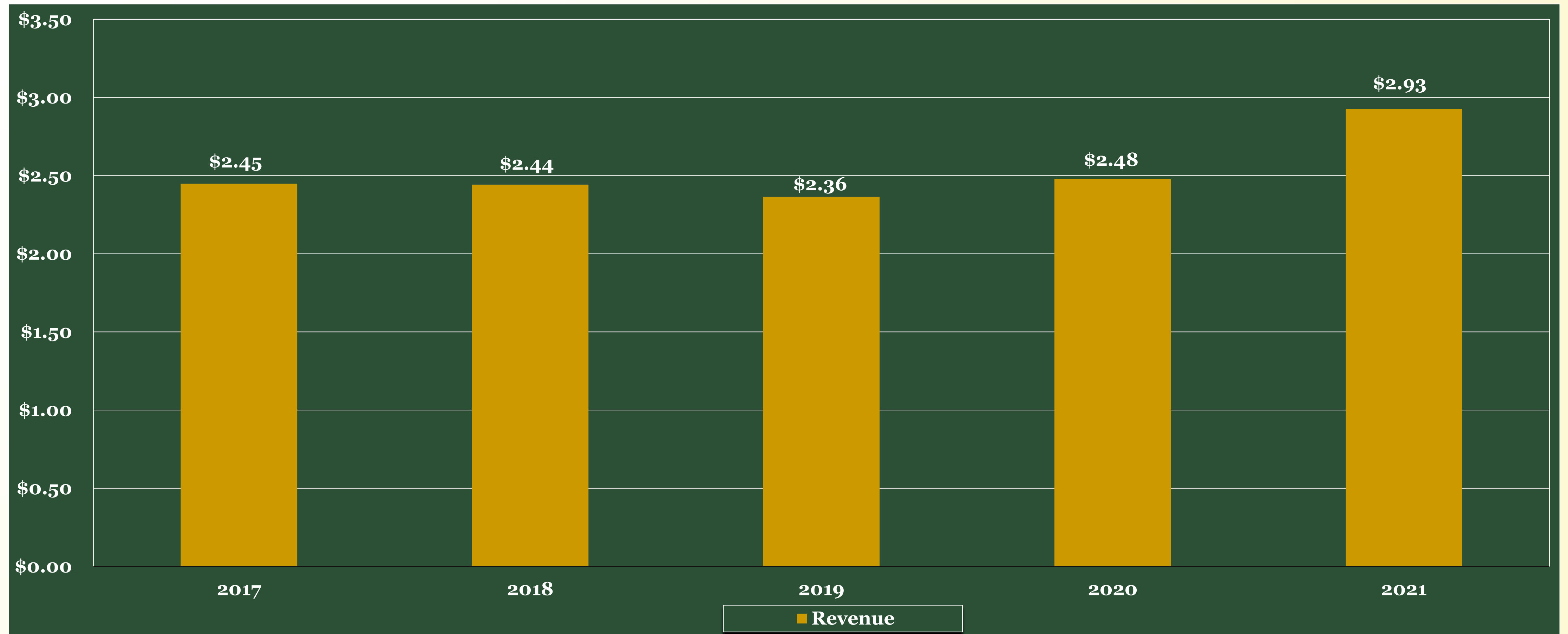
Jul 1 – Apr 30



\$ In Millions
License Sold In Thousands

FY17-21 Revenue Comparison - Boat

Jul 1 – Apr 30



\$ In Millions



FY18-21 Federal Revenue & Reimbursements

Jul 1 – Apr 30

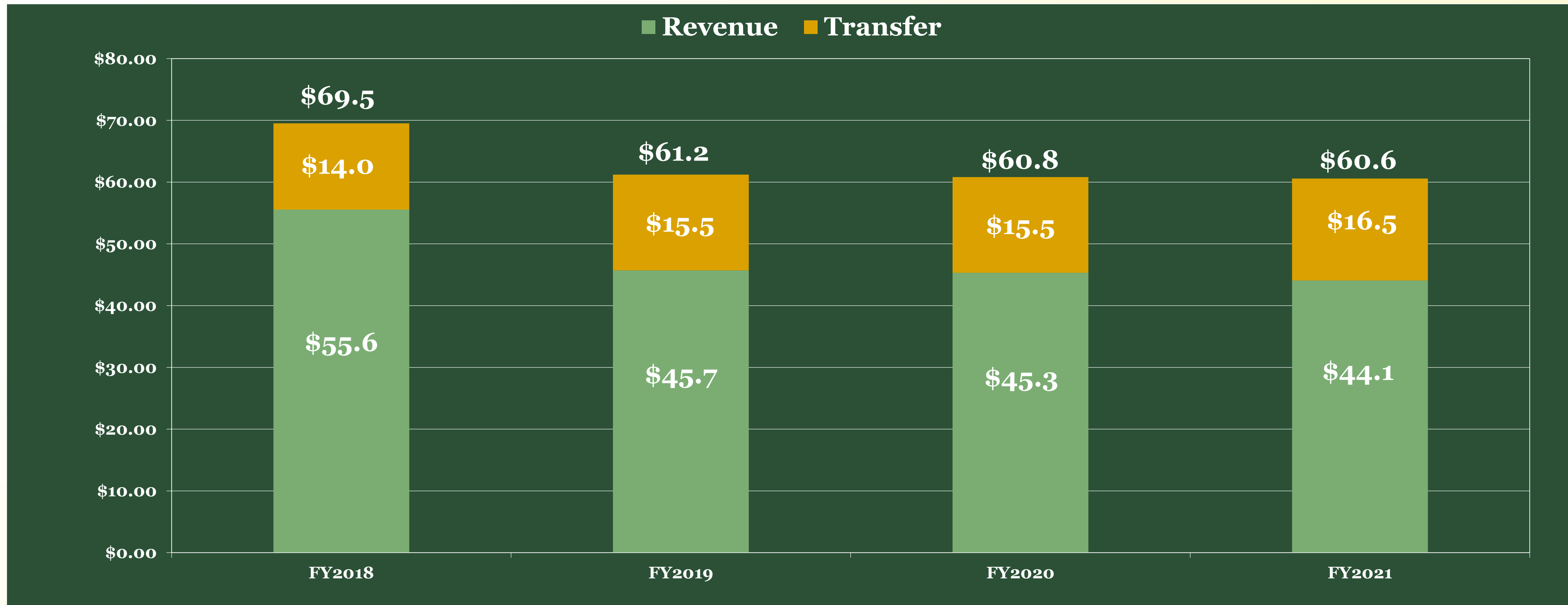
Federal Grant Program	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
Boating Safety	\$1,400	\$2,008	\$1,592	\$1,508
Sport Fish Restoration (DJ)	\$2,901	\$3,128	\$3,021	\$2,543
State Wildlife Grant (SWG)	\$549	\$1,182	\$1,086	\$76
Wildlife Restoration (PR)	\$17,343	\$11,580	\$9,004	\$5,405



\$ In Thousands

FY18-21 Total Revenue and Transfers

Jul 1 – Apr 30



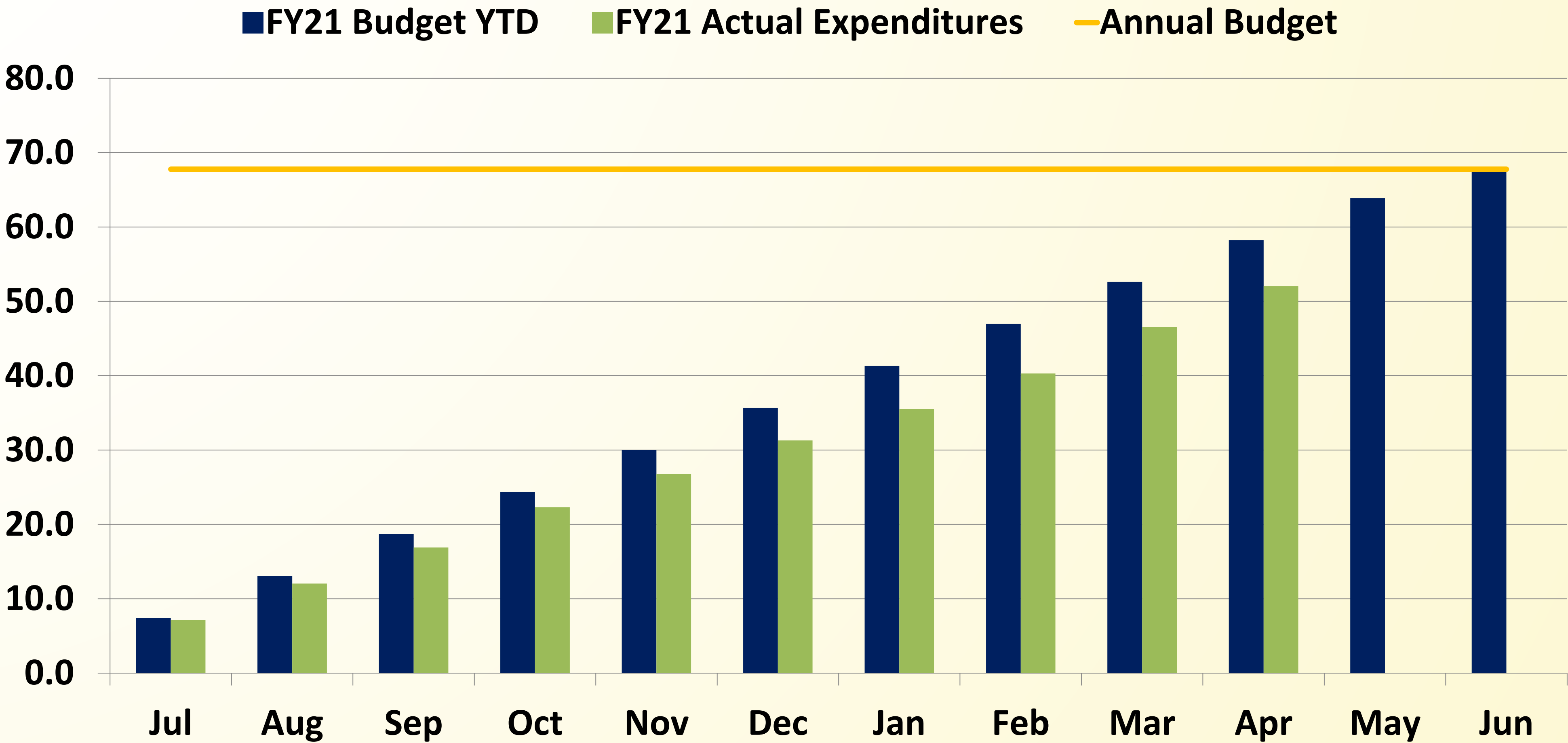
\$ In Millions

*FY18 includes Mitigation funds and additional PR funds for land purchases.



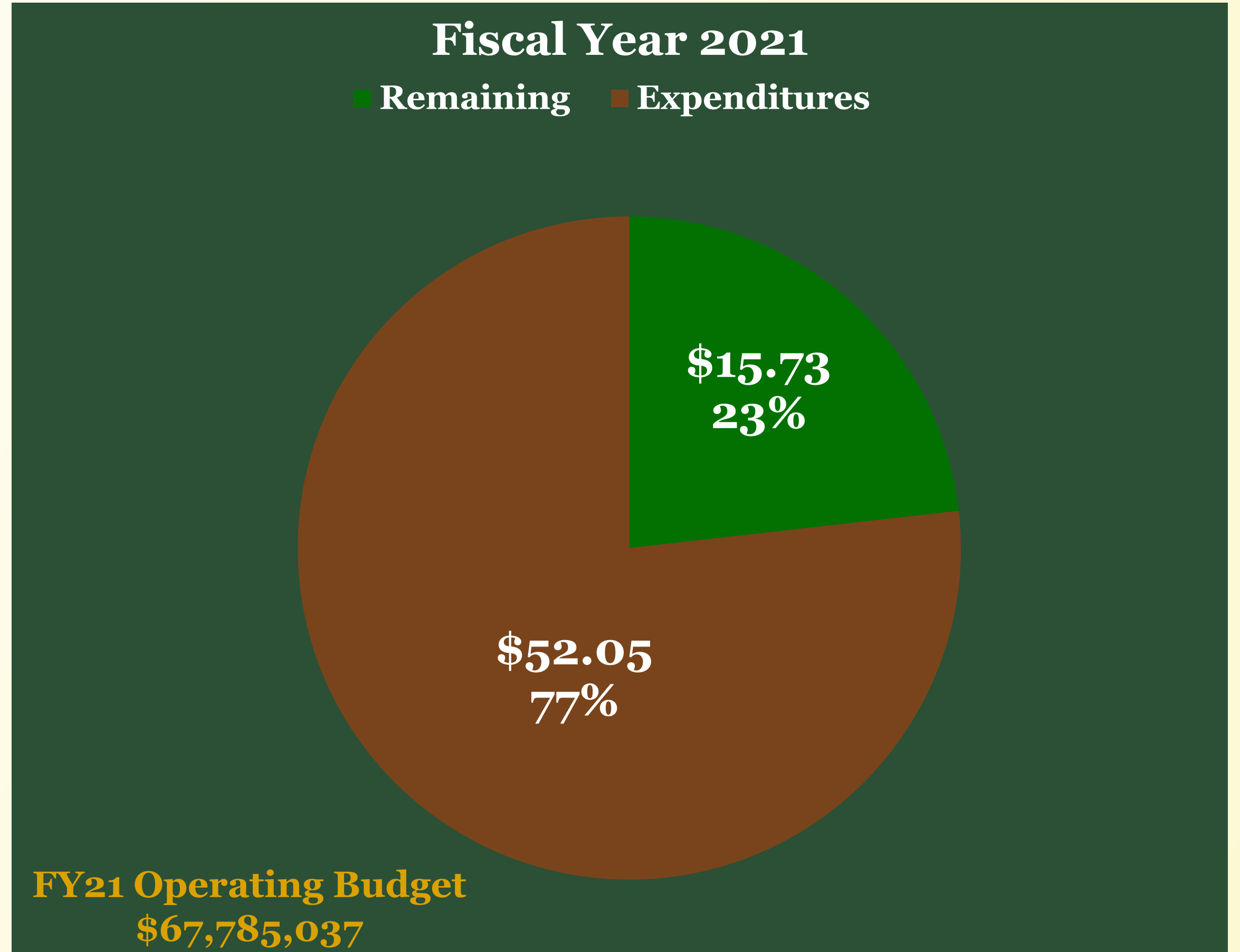
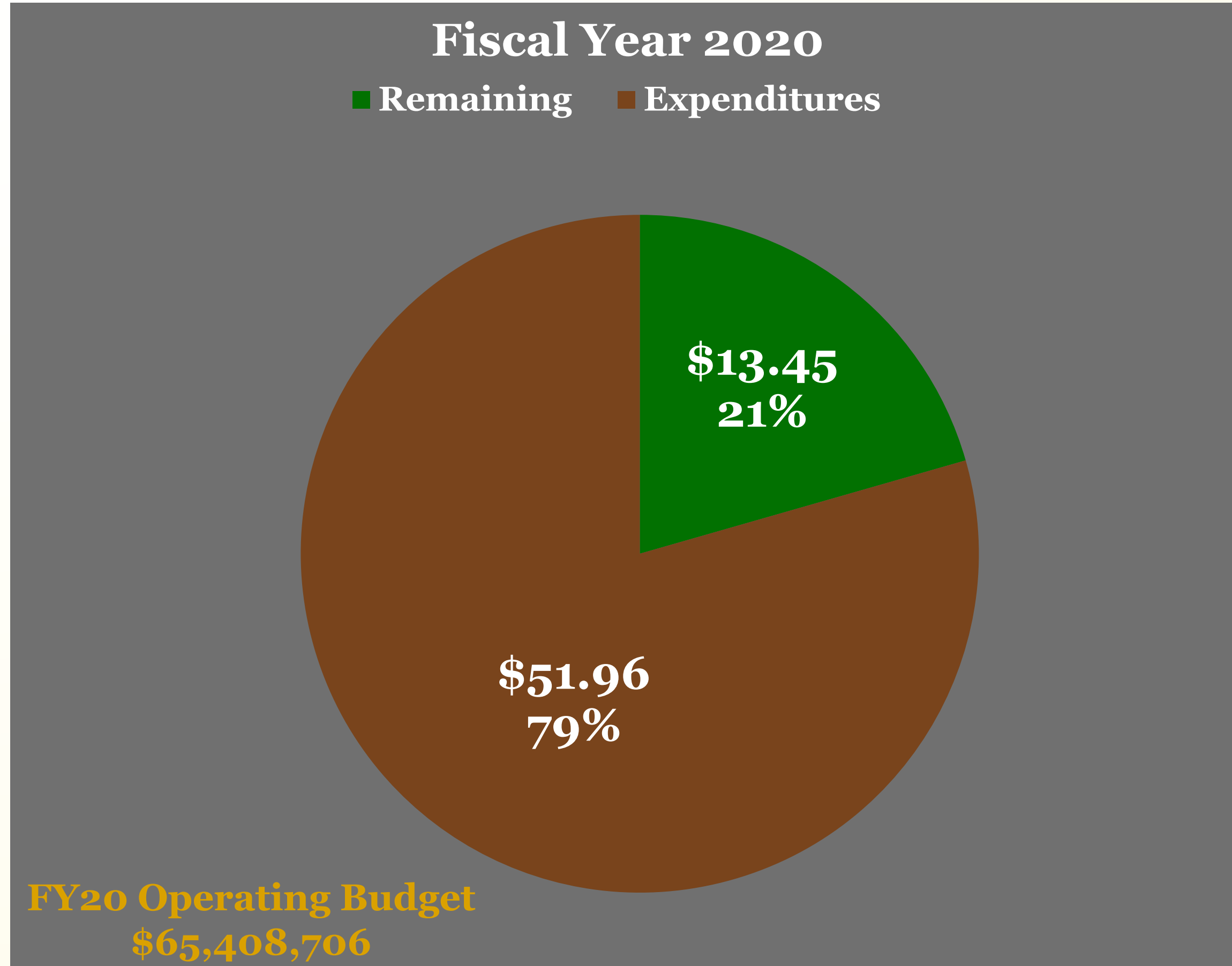
FY21 Budget Performance

Jul 1 – Apr 30



FY21 Operating Budget vs Expenditures

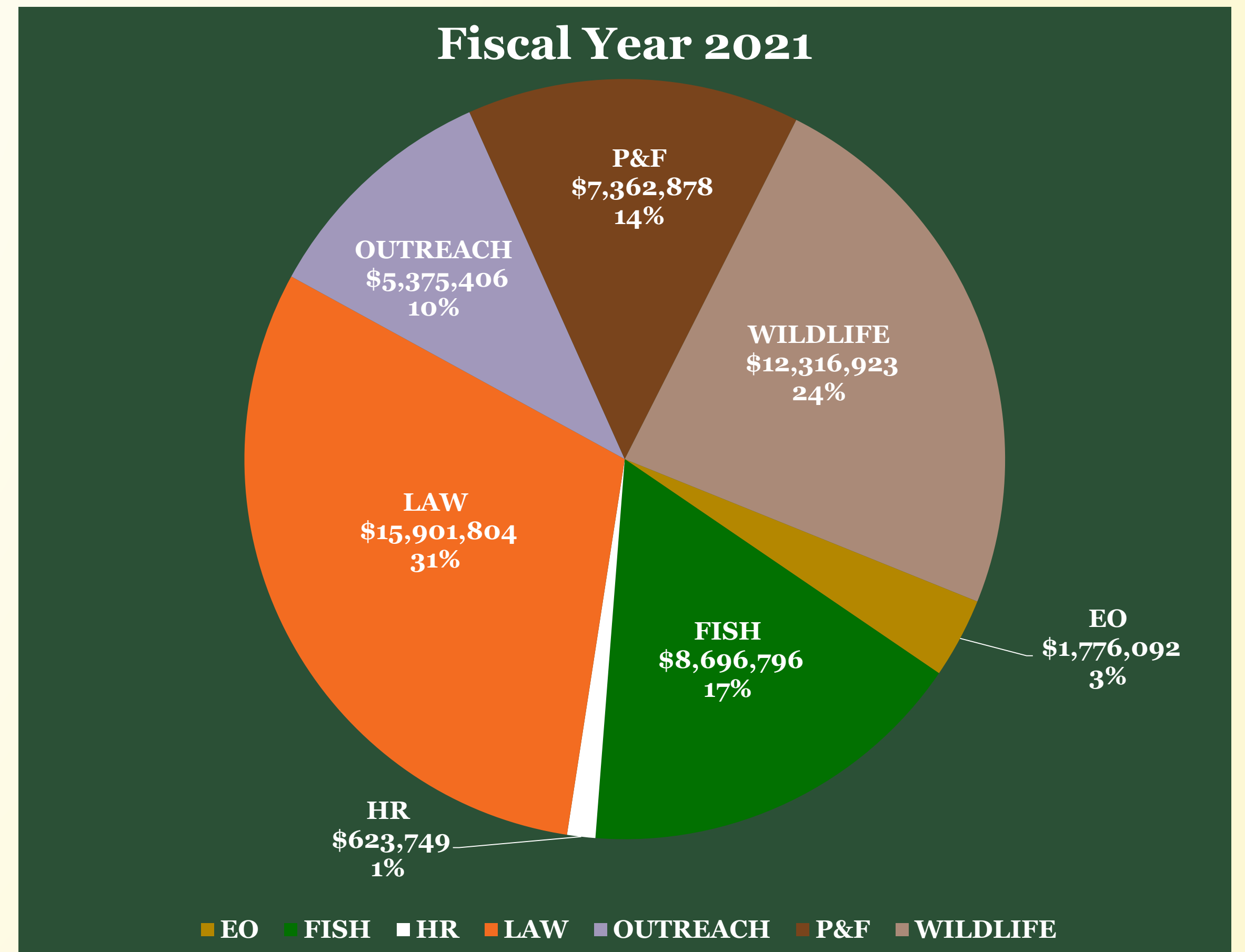
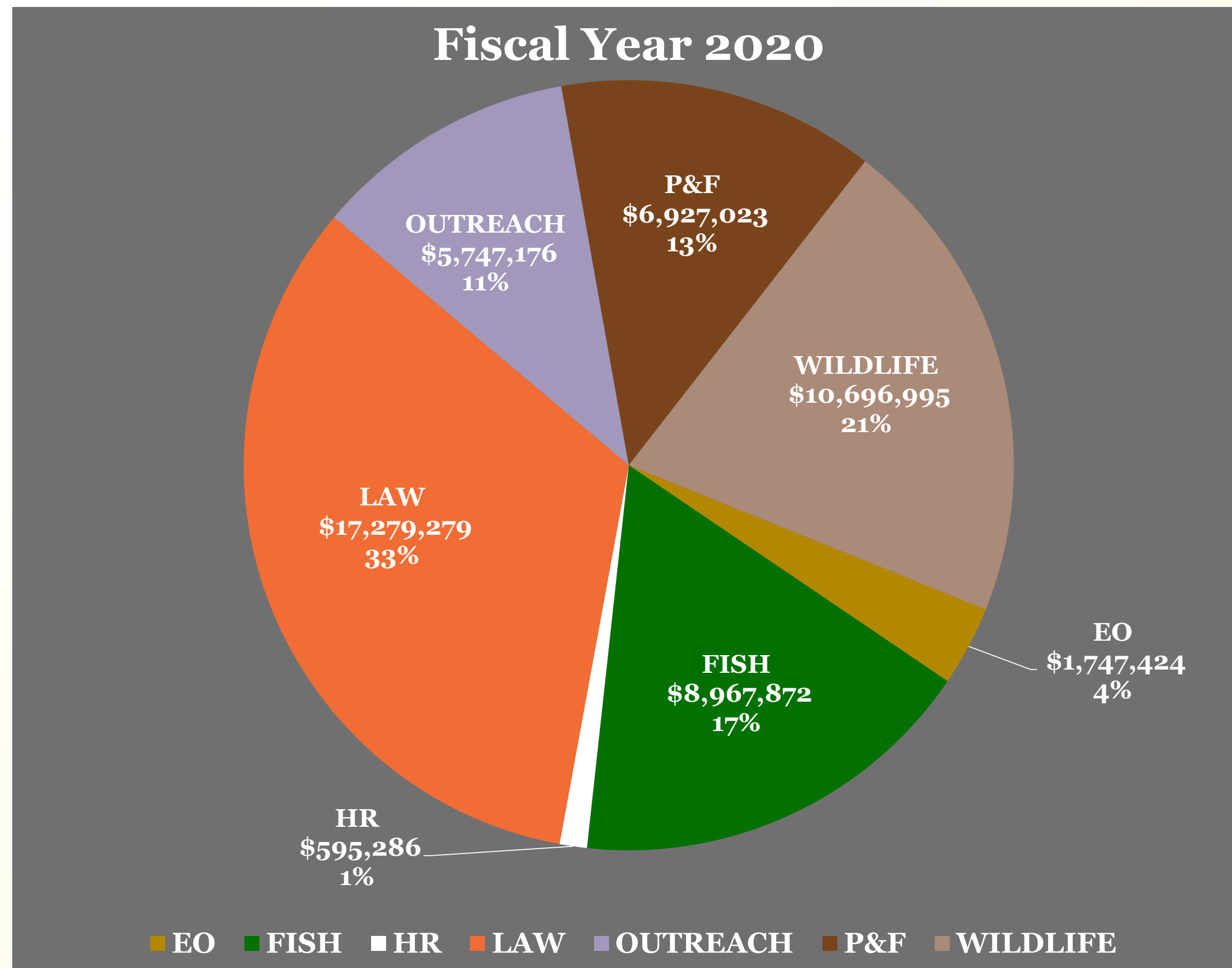
Jul 1 – Apr 30



\$ In Millions

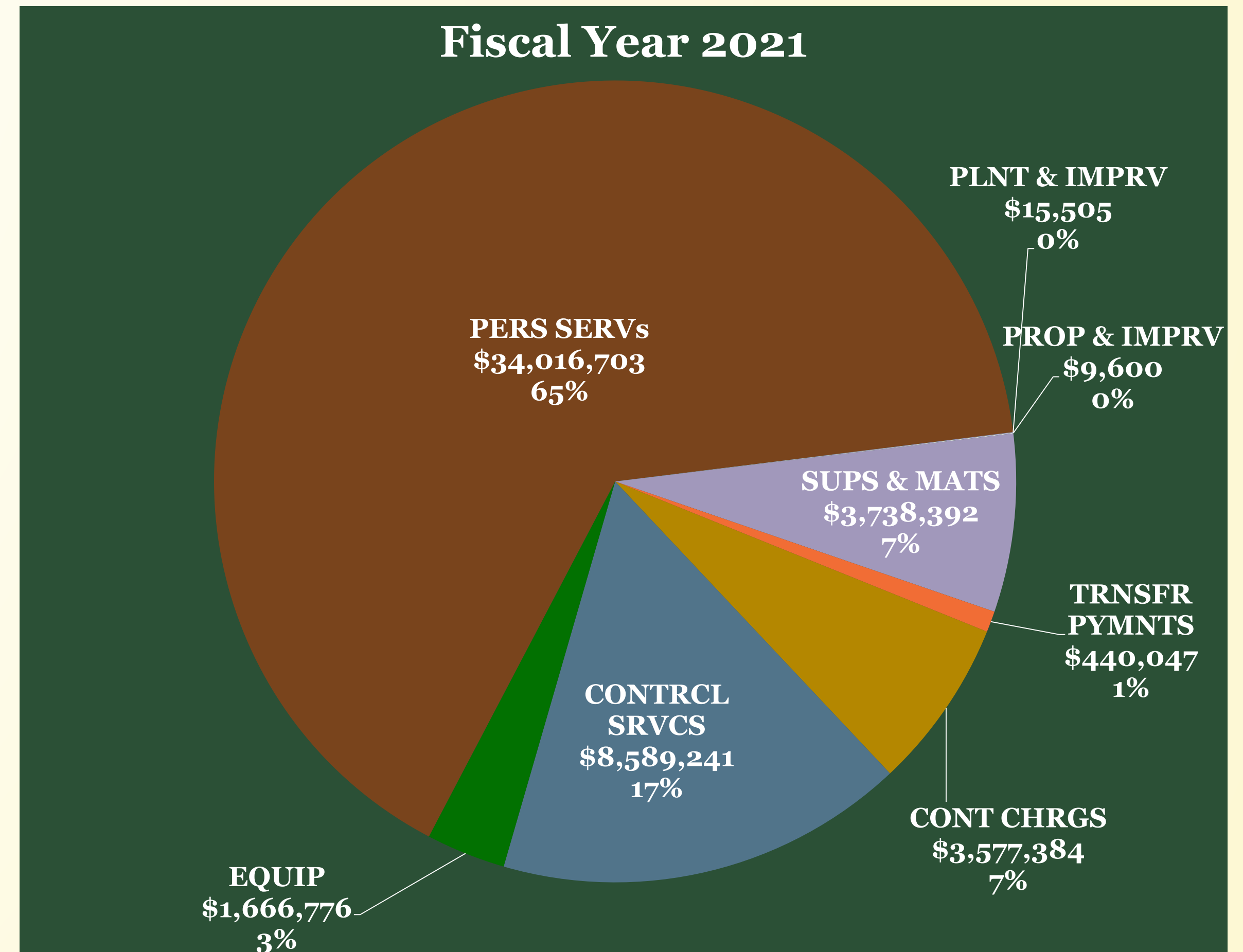
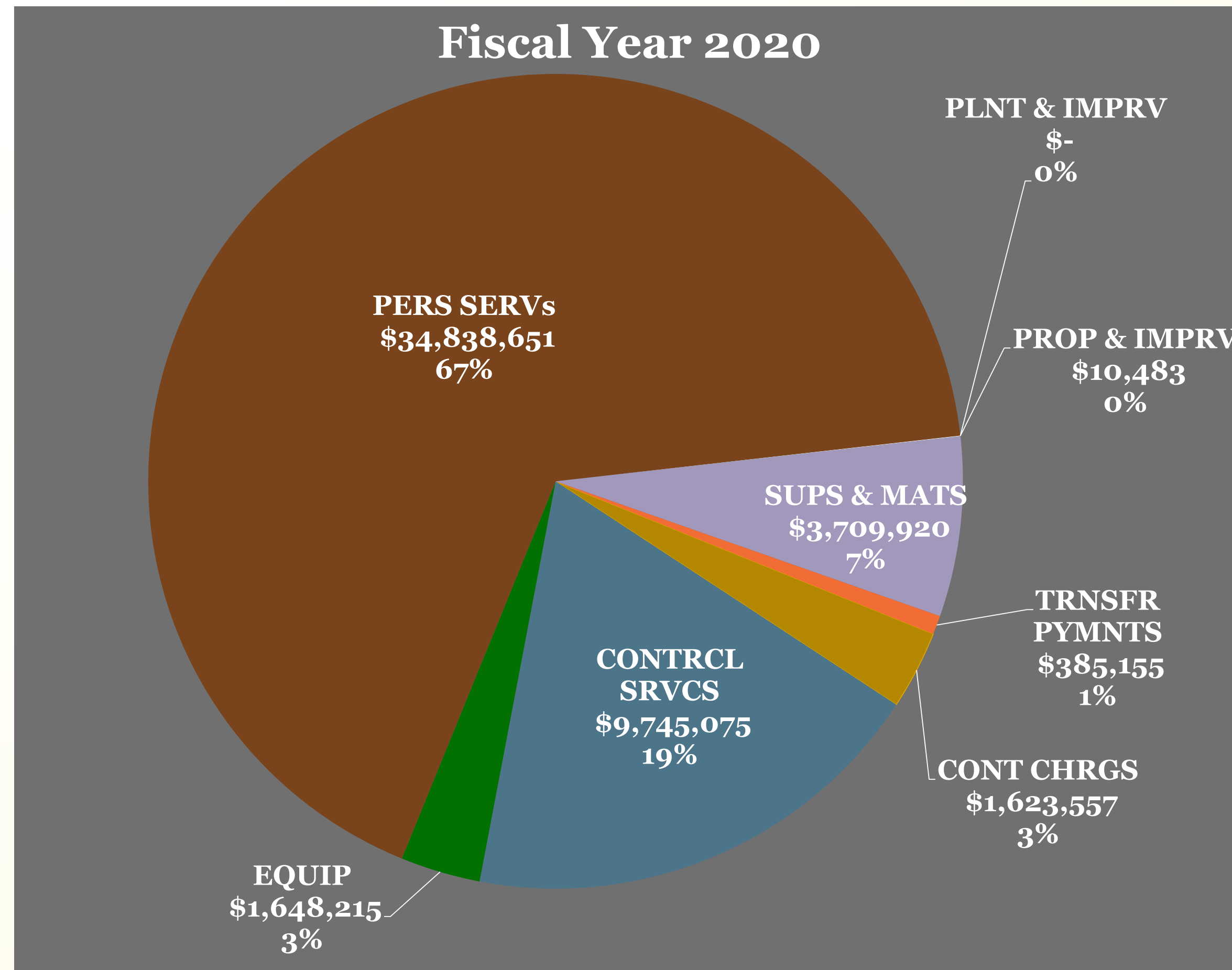
FY21 Operating Expenditures by Division

Jul 1 – Apr 30



FY21 Operating Expenditures by Account

Jul 1 – Apr 30

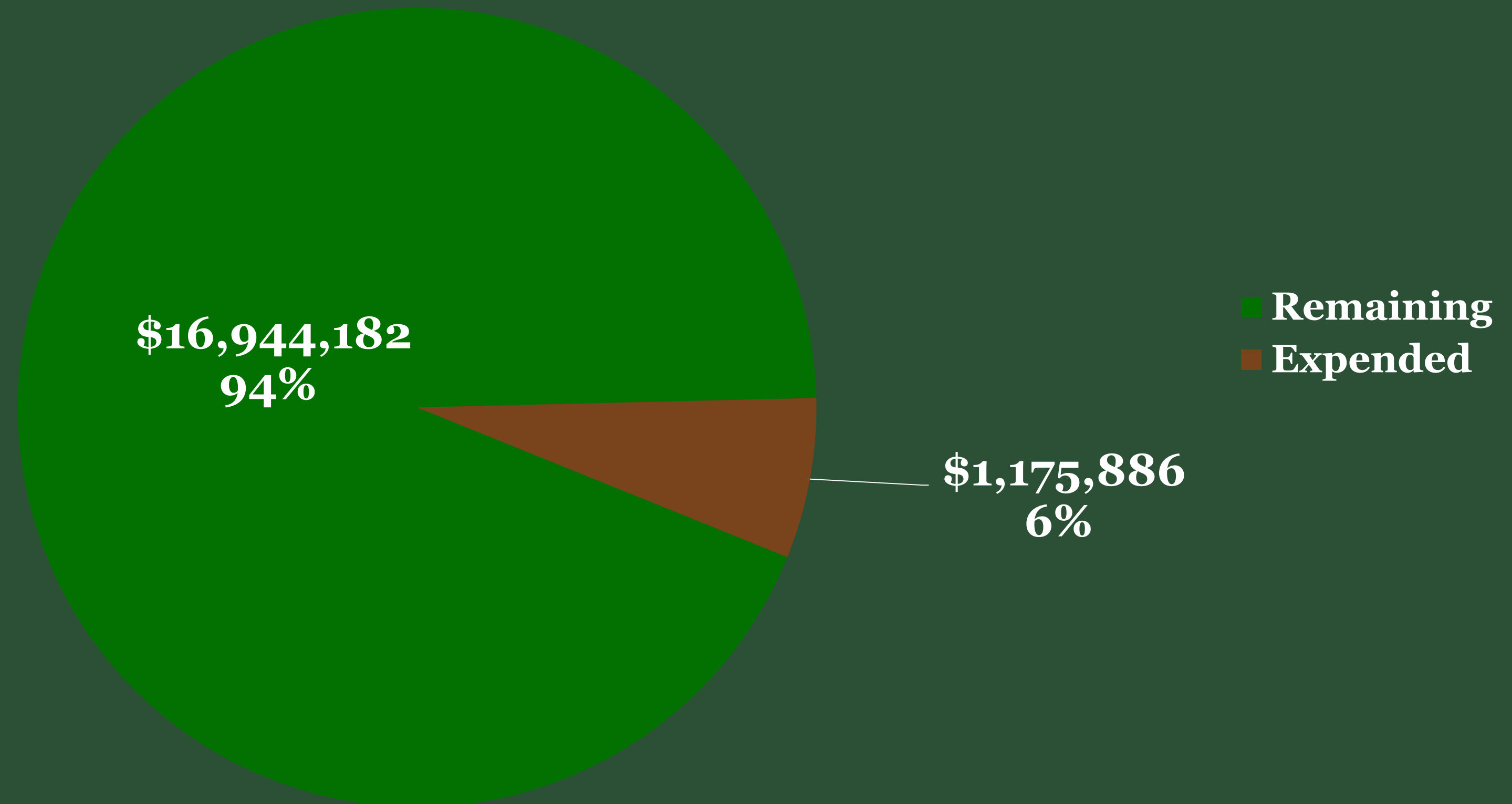


FY21 Capital Budget vs Expenditures

Jul 1 – Apr 30

FY21 Capital Budget
\$18,120,068

Fiscal Year 2021



FY21 Capital Expenditures by Project

Jul 1 – Apr 30

Project #	Project Name	FY21 Budget	FY21 Expended	% Spent	# of Projects
13316	Maintenance Reserve	\$944,389	\$329,654	34.9%	4
18103	Improvement for Facilities, Services, etc.	\$800,000	\$2,866	0.4%	4
18104	Land Acquisition	\$14,774,218	\$101,752	0.7%	14
18105	Dam Safety Program	\$798,201	\$480,626	60.2%	5
18106	Boating Access - New or Renovations	\$460,460	\$900	0.2%	6
17970	High Hazard Dam Safety - Bond Projects	\$342,800	\$260,089	75.9.%	2
Total		\$18,120,068	\$1,175,887	6.5%	35





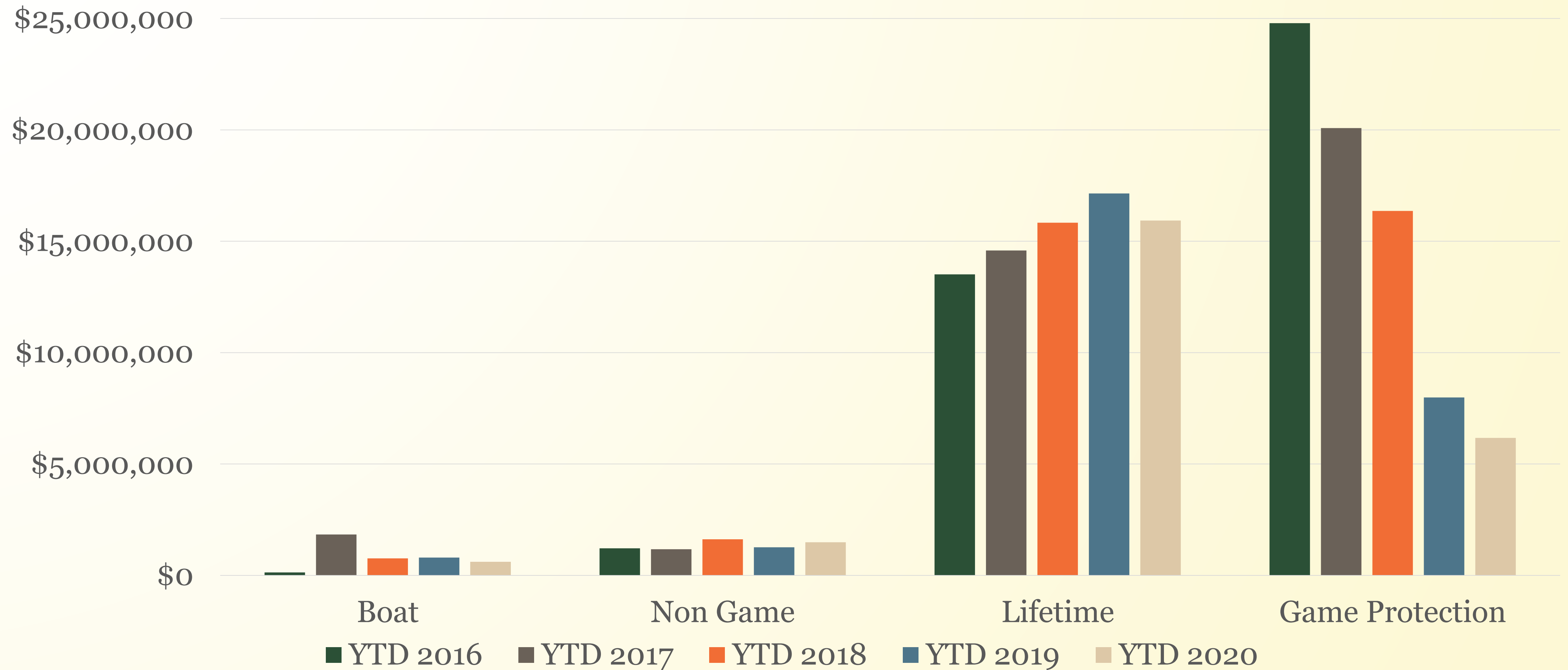
DEPARTMENT OF
**GAME & INLAND
FISHERIES**

CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

FY22 Budget Proposal



FY16-20 End of Year Fund Balance



FY21-22 Biennial Budget

FY22 (July 1, 2021—June 30, 2022)

- Operating Appropriation is **\$67.9M in FY21 and \$66.8M in FY22.**
- Includes specific appropriation requests for MITIGATION FUNDS.
- Each fiscal year also includes an additional \$2.1M for Central Appropriation Adjustments, to be absorbed within existing revenue.
- General Assembly removed 3.0% bonuses in FY21 and added 5.0% raises for eligible employees in FY22.

- Capital Appropriation REQUEST was \$9.25M in FY21 and \$9.25M in FY22.

- \$5.5M in Watercraft Sales and Use “Transfers” in each FY21 & FY22
- \$11M in HB38 “Transfers” in each FY21 & FY22.



FY 2022

Operating Budget

Request

Personnel and Non-Personnel Proposal:

\$64,430,529
(FY21 was \$63,846,582)

Mitigation/New Funding Proposal: **\$6,743,415**

Total Operating Budget Proposal: **\$71,173,944**



FY22 Operating Budget Considerations

- ☐ Budget Team and DWG Responsibilities
- ☐ Fund Balances and Federal Grant Eligibility
- ☐ Increased Personnel and Central Costs
- ☐ Current vacancies prioritized
- ☐ Division Priorities
 - ☐ **Executive Office/HR:** Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion; Training
 - ☐ **Outreach:** Private lands access, Customer service, Online education
 - ☐ **Wildlife:** Black Bear, Elk Management, Habitat Management/Enhancement on public/private Lands, Watchable Wildlife, Wetlands Restoration, Wildlife Health
 - ☐ **Law Enforcement:** Academy Class, Structure, Accreditation, Training and Development
 - ☐ **Fisheries:** Fish Local VA, Human Dimensions
 - ☐ **Planning and Finance:** Deep Dive into Budget Drivers



FY22 Operating Base Budget Summary

Division	FY21 Personnel	FY21 Non-Personnel	FY22 Personnel	FY22 Non-Personnel
Executive Office	\$1,827,895	\$329,858	\$1,999,529	\$342,973
Fisheries	\$7,660,695	\$3,670,660	\$7,779,041	\$3,411,722
Wildlife	\$7,703,750	\$5,729,310	\$8,373,912	\$4,905,385
Human Resources	\$719,524	\$12,500	\$725,508	\$12,500
Law Enforcement	\$16,085,158	\$4,148,993	\$16,050,771	\$4,588,459
Outreach	\$4,371,307	\$2,603,541	\$4,117,522	\$2,975,180
Planning & Finance	\$3,628,124	\$5,355,267	\$3,720,406	\$5,427,621
Total	\$41,996,454	\$21,850,129	\$42,766,690	\$21,663,839



FY21-22 Operating Mitigation Budget Summary

Program	FY21	FY22
Fisheries (DuPont)	\$312,551	\$378,222
Wildlife (Dominion)	\$3,026,184	\$2,958,607
Wildlife (HRBT)	\$600,000	\$1,820,683
New Federal Money	N/A	\$1,585,904
Total	\$3,938,735	\$6,743,415



FY22 Operating Budget Summary

Division	FY22 Personnel	FY22 Non-Personnel	FY22 TOTAL	% Share
Executive Office	\$1,999,529	\$342,973	\$2,342,502	3.64%
Fisheries	\$7,779,041	\$3,411,722	\$11,190,763	17.37%
Wildlife	\$8,373,912	\$4,905,385	\$13,279,296	20.61%
Human Resources	\$725,508	\$12,500	\$738,008	1.15%
Law Enforcement	\$16,050,771	\$4,588,459	\$20,639,230	32.03%
Outreach	\$4,117,522	\$2,975,180	\$7,092,702	11.01%
Planning & Finance	\$3,720,406	\$5,427,621	\$9,148,027	14.20%
Total	\$42,766,690	\$21,663,839	\$64,430,529	100.00%

*Does not include Mitigation/New Federal Fund Amounts



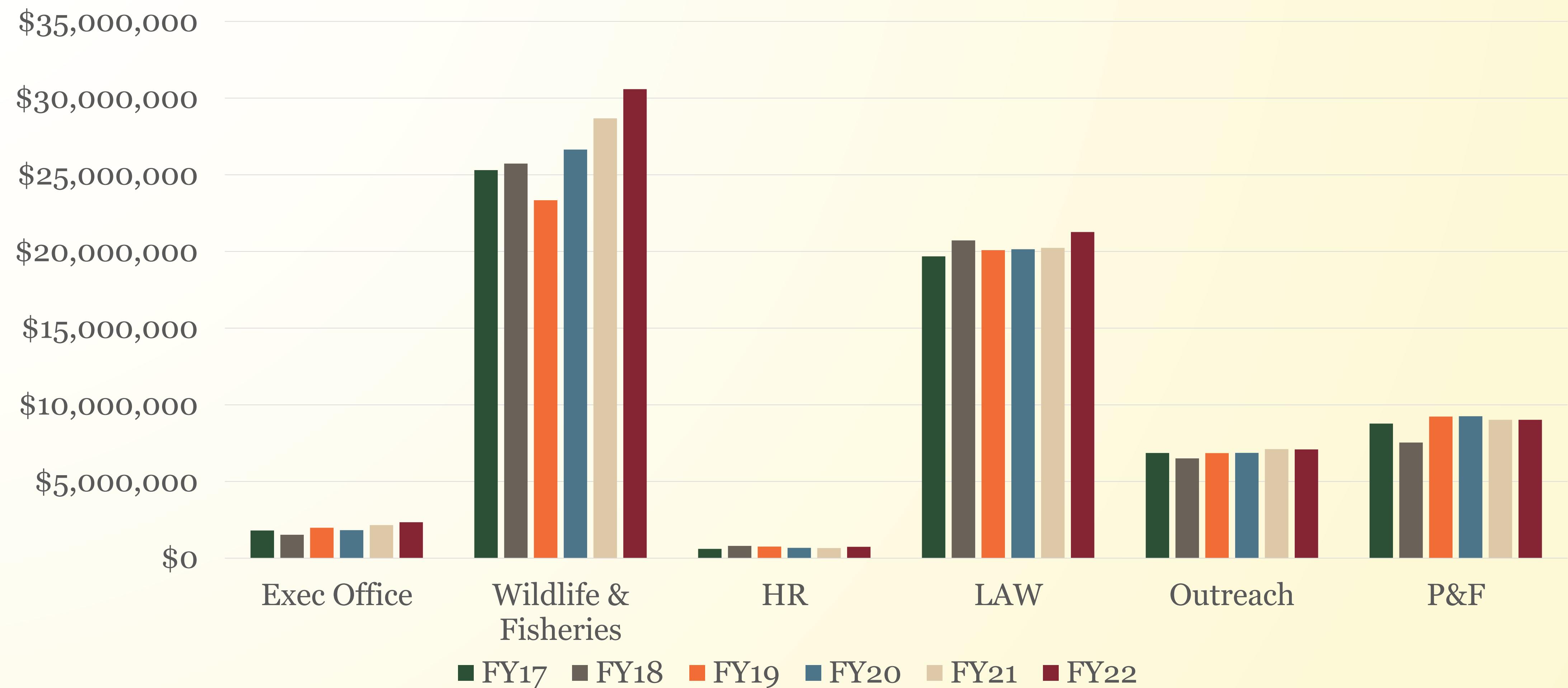
Operating Budget Division Share: FY21-22

Division	FY21 Budget	FY21 % Share	FY22 Budget	FY22 % Share
EO	\$2,157,753	3.38%	\$2,342,502	3.64%
Fisheries	\$11,331,355	17.75%	\$11,190,763	17.37%
Wildlife	\$13,433,060	21.04%	\$13,279,296	20.61%
HR	\$732,024	1.15%	\$738,008	1.15%
Law	\$20,234,151	31.69%	\$20,639,230	32.03%
Outreach	\$6,974,848	10.92%	\$7,092,702	11.01%
P&F	\$8,983,391	14.07%	\$9,148,027	14.20%
Total	\$63,846,582	100.00%	\$64,430,529	100.00%

*Does not include Mitigation/New Federal Fund Amounts



Operating Budget Division Trends

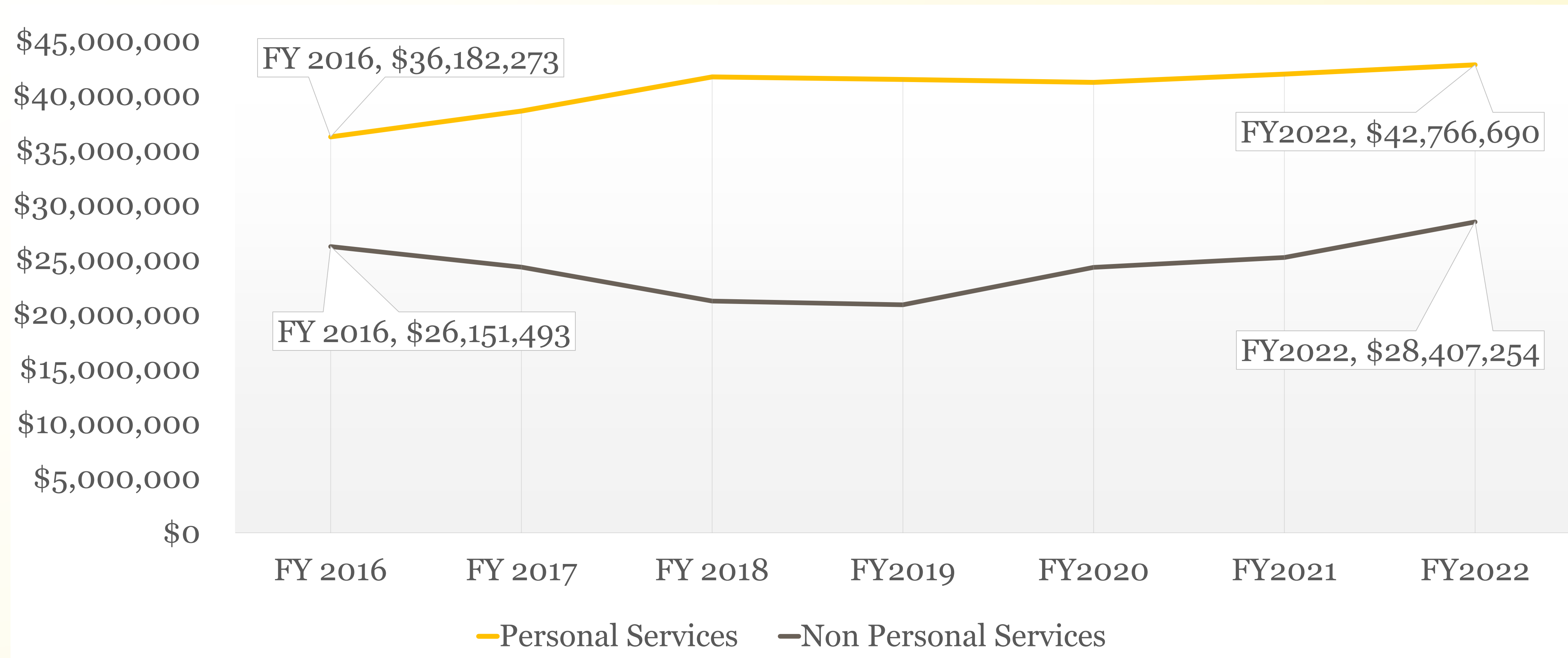


Operating Budget Staffing Trends

	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22
Full-Time Employees	463	469	461	453	448	446
Wage Employees	97	98	86	95	88	68



Operating Budget Trends (Per v. Non-Per)



Operating Budget Division Staffing: FY20-22

Division Staffing	FTE '20	Wage '20	FTE '21	Wage '21	FTE '22	Wage '22
Exec. Office	12	1	13	2	14	2
Fisheries	82	39	78	40	83	24
Wildlife	82	29	75	26	82	23
HR	5	1	6	1	6	1
Law	194	7	197	5	188	4
Outreach	44	16	46	12	41	11
P&F	34	5	33	2	32	3
TOTAL	453	98	448	88	446	68



FY 2022

Capital Budget

Preliminary Request

Overall Proposal: \$4,850,000



FY22 Capital Budget Considerations

- ☐ Budgeting to account for increased Operating Budget costs
- ☐ Hatchery Renovations
- ☐ Fishing Access
- ☐ Completion of Capital Bonds Projects and Reimbursements for High Hazard Dams
- ☐ Insurance Claim Projects
- ☐ Construction-Ready Boating Access Site Projects and Repairs
- ☐ Strategic Review for all DWR infrastructure



FY22 Capital Budget Preliminary Request

Project Description	Capital Account	Funding	Cost Estimate
King & Queen Hatchery New Pond Liners - 9 & 10	Maintenance Reserve	State	\$800,000.00
King & Queen - Replace Generators	Maintenance Reserve	State	\$450,000.00
Amelia - Reconstruct Fishing Pier	WMA Improvements	Federal	\$400,000.00
Chandler's Mill	State Dam Safety	State	\$500,000
Lower Powhatan Dam Repair	State Dam Safety	State	\$500,000.00
King & Queen Icehouse Dam Repair	State Dam Safety	State	\$1,000,000.00
Palmyra Landing	Boating Access	Federal	\$440,000.00
Briery Creek Landing	Boating Access	Federal	\$360,000
Lawnes Creek Landing	Boating Access	State/Insurance	\$400,000.00
TOTAL			\$4,850,000



Questions?

Motion: To recommend adoption of the FY22 Operating Budget and Capital Budget, as presented.



2020 Federal Audit

☐ Federal Expenditures/Activities during SFY 2019-2020 (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2020)

☐ Initial Findings and Recommendations:

1. Ensuring the correct sub-recipient vs. contractor determinations for all third-party agreements
2. Treating Program funds correctly as pass-through for subawards or contracts
3. Ineligible Federal expenditures claimed by the University of Tennessee for the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI)

☐ Auditors are currently reviewing records for in-kind match and wrapping up the “field work.” Completion expected soon.



Final Questions





VIRGINIA WILDLIFE VIEWING PLAN 2021 - 2031



Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources

About the Contributors to the Plan

The Virginia Wildlife Viewing Plan is the culmination of a 3.5-year collaborative effort between the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) and Virginia Tech's Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation. Brian Moyer (Deputy Director, Outreach Division, DWR) served as the agency's project leader. Dr. Ashley Dayer (Assistant Professor, Virginia Tech and Principal Investigator for this project), Dr. Jessica Barnes (Research Scientist, Virginia Tech), and Dr. Ashley Peele (Research Scientist, Virginia Tech) led the complementary study effort to inform this plan, facilitated the process to develop the content of this plan, and coordinated its writing. They oversaw the data collection and analysis efforts of Graduate Research Assistant Bennett Grooms, Research Technician Jonathan Rutter, and Undergraduate Research Assistant Elizabeth Tsang. Research Technician Jillian Everly also contributed to survey data entry. Additionally, Brian Moyer (DWR), Jessica Ruthenberg (DWR), Meagan Thomas (DWR), Jeff Trollinger (DWR), Sergio Harding (DWR), Becky Gwynn (DWR), Marc Puckett (DWR), Steve Living (DWR), Timothy Lane (DWR), and Michelle Prysby (Virginia Master Naturalists) contributed to the writing of this plan. A Technical Advisory Committee of DWR employees from across Virginia and representing a variety of divisions within the agency (see Appendix A for members) worked with a Stakeholder Advisory Committee representing wildlife and outdoor organizations, agencies, and sectors from Virginia (see Appendix A for members) to develop content for the plan.



Acknowledgements

We appreciate the 4,628 wildlife recreationists and members of the public in the Commonwealth of Virginia that participated in the focus groups (Grooms et al., 2019), surveys (Grooms et al., 2020), and public input period that informed the final version of this plan. Their time and thoughtful reflections ensured that this plan was based on an understanding of the experiences of a broad constituency.

Suggested Citation

Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. 2021. *Virginia Wildlife Viewing Plan, 2021–2031*. Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources: Richmond, Virginia, USA. Available online at: dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife-watching/wildlife-viewing-plan/

Virginia Wildlife Viewing Plan 2021-2031: Executive Summary



Wildlife viewing, defined as intentionally observing, feeding, or photographing wildlife, or visiting or maintaining natural areas because of wildlife, is one of the most popular outdoor recreation activities in the United States. The 2016 National Survey of Hunting, Fishing, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation reported that there are approximately 86 million wildlife viewers aged 16 or older in the U.S. – more than one-third of the adult population – and participation in wildlife viewing has been increasing since the mid-1990s (USDOI et al. 2016). Consistent with national trends, in 2016, about 35% of Virginia’s population viewed wildlife, amounting to 2.1 million wildlife viewers in the state (Rockville Institute, 2020). A growing body of literature shows that wildlife viewers contribute to habitat and wildlife conservation financially, politically, and through participation in other conservation activities (Cooper et al., 2015; Hvenegaard, 2002; McFarlane & Boxall, 1996). In 2016, Virginia wildlife viewers spent over \$3.2 billion for their wildlife viewing activities, both in and out of state, on equipment purchases, membership dues and contributions, and trip-related expenses, including food and lodging, transportation, and access fees for public and private lands (Rockville Institute, 2020). Beyond its direct conservation potential, wildlife viewing is also a means of connecting more people to nature (Kellert et al., 2017).

Wildlife viewers, as a substantial and growing proportion of the U. S. public, are thus a critical constituency for wildlife agencies, especially given stable or declining rates of participation in hunting and angling and associated revenues over the past decade (AFWA & WMI, 2019). In 2017, the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) became the first state to include wildlife viewing as a distinct recreation activity in its Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (hereafter, R3) Plan, which is part of the nationwide R3 initiative to align the operations of wildlife agencies with an overall objective of increasing public engagement in outdoor recreation. This inclusion of viewers reflects the DWR’s over fifty-year history of working to support participation in wildlife viewing and conserve viewable, nongame species. This work began slowly, with origins in scientific projects focused on single wildlife species, and has evolved today to include comprehensive habitat management on agency lands that provides opportunities for wildlife viewing; targeted research and conservation that includes all wildlife species; promotion of and structural support for nature tourism; informal and formal wildlife and habitat

education; and programming to support safe viewing experiences and prevent human-wildlife conflict. Still, an analysis conducted by agency staff and stakeholders at an R3 workshop in August 2017 identified limited outreach and engagement with wildlife viewers and a perception that the agency is not an advocate for these constituents as threats to the DWR's ability to achieve its R3 objectives and overall mission (DWR, n.d.). To improve engagement, understanding, and mutual support between wildlife viewers and the DWR, in 2018 agency staff collaborated with Virginia Tech to initiate human dimensions research and a participatory planning process designed to help the agency better serve Virginia's many and diverse wildlife viewers.

This Wildlife Viewing Plan is the first comprehensive plan developed for the DWR for engaging with and supporting wildlife viewing. It was co-produced by a 15-member Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), composed of DWR staff, and a 14-member Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC), composed of individuals and organizational representatives with experience and interest in wildlife viewing in Virginia. The SAC and TAC met in person and virtually to identify issues related to wildlife viewing in Virginia; develop a values statement and broad goals for the plan; strategically consider the internal and external conditions that may shape the DWR's success in supporting wildlife viewing; discuss general directions for objectives and strategies under each plan goal; and brainstorm specific tactics the DWR could employ to increase participation in wildlife viewing and conservation and engagement between wildlife viewers and the agency. The resulting plan provides direction and priorities to orient the DWR's efforts related to wildlife viewing through 2031, but relies on the experience and expertise of agency staff and partners to define and implement specific tactics that will fulfill the values and achieve the goals outlined here for wildlife viewing in Virginia. In addition to providing standalone guidance, this plan provides a basis for the development of an operational R3 plan for wildlife viewing.

Wildlife Recreation Study

In concert with the planning process for this Wildlife Viewing Plan, the DWR contracted with researchers at Virginia Tech to conduct human dimensions research on the behaviors and interests of the growing number and diversity of wildlife recreationists (including birders, other wildlife viewers, hunters, and anglers) throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. This mixed-methods study consisted of focus groups (Grooms et al. 2019); a survey distributed to a random sample of Virginia residents and to recreationists currently connected to DWR through license sales, agency communications, or citizen science (Grooms et al. 2020); and a web-based analysis of wildlife viewing organizations in the state (Tsang et al. *in review*). Results from each phase of the Wildlife Recreation Study were presented to the SAC and TAC during planning meetings, in order to support the development of data-driven goals, objectives, and strategies for this Wildlife Viewing Plan. Initial focus groups with wildlife recreationists provided rich and detailed insight into the recreation and conservation experiences of hunters, anglers, birders, and other wildlife viewers in their own words. Subsequent surveys produced more generalizable findings that were used to understand the wildlife viewing community as a whole and how wildlife viewing intersects with other kinds of wildlife recreation. Finally, a web-based stakeholder analysis provided information about the breadth of organizations and agencies that support wildlife viewing in Virginia and the resources and activities they provide. This analysis infused the planning process for this Wildlife Viewing Plan with information about the priorities of the many wildlife viewing organizations that were not represented on the SAC.

Values, Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

The SAC and TAC for the Wildlife Viewing Plan developed a set of values, goals, and objectives to guide the DWR's efforts related to wildlife viewing for the next 10 years. The Values Statement for the Wildlife Viewing Plan emphasizes the importance of wildlife and their habitats; the fundamental relationship

between wildlife-related recreation and wildlife conservation; the shared privilege and stewardship responsibility inherent in the governance of Virginia's natural resources as a public trust; and the need for wildlife organizations and agencies to work cooperatively to expand exposure to and experience with the unique and diverse wildlife of Virginia. It further holds that wildlife viewing opportunities in Virginia should be connected to wildlife conservation; biologically, socially, and financially sustainable; abundant, diverse, and accessible for all people in the Commonwealth; and adapted over time, based on the best available science.

The following goals build from the principles contained in the Values Statement and capture overarching ideas about what DWR should strive to accomplish related to wildlife viewing. In the plan, each goal is accompanied by multiple objectives (more specific targets that will contribute to the realization of plan goals) and strategies (a suite of methods the agency might use to achieve the plan's objectives).

Goal 1: Connect diverse segments of the public to wildlife and wildlife viewing in Virginia

Engaging diverse communities has been a challenge for fish and wildlife agencies across the country, but it is essential for fulfilling agency directives to govern wildlife resources as a trust for all members of the public (AFWA & WMI, 2019). Additionally, expanding participation in wildlife viewing can directly advance conservation, given the contributions wildlife viewers make to the scientific knowledge of wildlife populations (McKinley et al., 2017) and their participation in activities, from land stewardship to advocacy, that support wildlife and habitats (Cooper et al., 2015). Goal 1 of the Wildlife Viewing Plan thus focuses on connecting diverse segments of the public to wildlife and wildlife viewing. Associated objectives include increasing participation in wildlife viewing among underrepresented gender, ethno-racial, and socio-economic groups; providing opportunities that promote positive engagement between urban communities and wildlife; fostering an appreciation for wildlife and participation in wildlife viewing among youth and families; supporting viewers with little or no experience so they form enduring connections to wildlife and viewing; and connecting other outdoor recreation groups, such as paddlers and campers, to wildlife viewing.

Goal 2: Provide a variety of wildlife viewing opportunities accessible to all in the Commonwealth

Results from the Wildlife Recreation Survey indicated that wildlife viewers feel DWR can better serve them by providing more access to locations for viewing birds and other wildlife and more information about the locations, such as Wildlife Management Areas and the Virginia Bird and Wildlife Trail, that are already available (Grooms et al., 2020). Goal 2 of the Wildlife Viewing Plan is oriented towards increasing opportunities for viewers to experience wildlife at destinations across the state and close to home.

Goal 3: Promote wildlife and habitat conservation through wildlife viewing

Fish and wildlife agencies face sometimes competing directives to both connect people to wildlife and conserve natural resources in light of human impacts on species and habitats. The capacity of wildlife viewers and other recreationists outside of hunting and angling communities to advance wildlife conservation is central to the imperative for fish and wildlife agencies to meaningfully engage with these constituencies (AFWA & WMI, 2019). Goal 3 of the Wildlife Viewing Plan seeks to maximize the connection between wildlife viewing and wildlife and habitat conservation by increasing opportunities for viewers to directly perform conservation activities and by cultivating a culture of responsible wildlife viewing in the Commonwealth.

Goal 4: Connect broader constituencies to the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources through wildlife viewing

The explicit inclusion of wildlife viewing in DWR's updated mission and R3 planning are evidence of increasing support within the agency for engaging with wildlife viewers as key constituents. However, more actively engaging with and prioritizing the needs of wildlife viewers as stakeholders may present challenges to existing agency culture and structure. The final goal of the plan focuses specifically on fostering mutual understanding and support between wildlife viewers and DWR. Objectives under this goal aim to increase viewers' awareness of DWR and its relevance to their activities; promote two-way dialogue and trust between viewers and the agency; and increase financial connections between wildlife viewers and DWR's conservation work.

Implementation and Evaluation

Successful implementation of this Wildlife Viewing Plan over the next 10 years relies on coordination and cooperation across agency divisions and ongoing attention to the staffing and financial resources needed to implement plan strategies, achieve plan objectives, and realize the plan goals of promoting broader participation in wildlife viewing and more meaningful engagement between wildlife viewers and the DWR. The final section of this document outlines which agency divisions, and, in some cases programs, will be central to the implementation of each of the strategies outlined in this plan and a possible framework for tracking incremental progress towards the plan's ambitious goals.

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A photograph of two young girls in a forest. The girl on the left, wearing a green jacket, is pointing her finger towards the left. The girl on the right, wearing a red and blue plaid shirt, is holding a long wooden stick. They are both smiling and looking in the same direction. The background is a lush green forest.

Part I

Introduction to the DWR and the Wildlife Viewing Plan

ABOUT THE VIRGINIA DWR

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) is guided by a mission to **conserve** and manage wildlife populations and habitat for the benefit of present and future generations; **connect** people to Virginia's outdoors through boating, education, fishing, hunting, trapping, wildlife viewing, and other wildlife-related activities; and **protect** people and property by promoting safe outdoor experiences and managing human-wildlife conflicts (DWR, 2020). This mission statement was approved by the agency's Governor-appointed Board of Directors in 2016 to clarify the DWR's mandate to manage Virginia's wildlife resources, as embodied in the Code of Virginia. The Virginia General Assembly has charged the Board and DWR with species management (§29.1-103), public education (§29.1-109), law enforcement (§29.1-109), and regulations (§29.1-501) related to the state's wildlife. To fulfill its mission, the DWR has more specific goals to manage wildlife populations and habitats to meet the balanced needs among diverse human communities; recruit, retain, and re-engage people who enjoy wildlife and boating activities; and promote people's awareness and appreciation of their role in wildlife conservation. Formerly named the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, as of July 1, 2020, the agency was renamed the Department of Wildlife Resources, in order to reflect the wide range of its responsibilities and to clarify that its efforts are relevant to all Virginians interested in wildlife and the outdoors.

The DWR works to ensure that all Virginians have the opportunity to appreciate outdoor recreation across the Commonwealth by enhancing fish and wildlife resources and providing opportunities to pursue those activities in a safe manner. Annual activities of the DWR include (but are not limited to):

- Managing more than 225,000 acres of land for fish and wildlife habitat and public access.
- Maintaining fishing and boating access to over 175,000 acres of lakes and reservoirs.

- Managing water resources for fish and other aquatic species in over 25,000 miles of cold- and warmwater streams and over 200 lakes and reservoirs.
- Providing boating and hunting safety education to over 20,000 students annually.
- Inviting extensive citizen participation in the crafting of wildlife regulations.
- Enforcing hunting, fishing, and boating regulations for resource protection and public safety.
- Overseeing, funding, and directing research and monitoring to inform conservation and management decisions for wildlife resources.
- Offering technical support to the public for the management of wildlife, fisheries, and their associated habitat.
- Providing technical oversight and recommendations for environmental projects and permitting, endangered species review and compliance, and mitigation measures for impacts to federal and state listed species, wetlands, streams and many species of state concern.

In support of its mission, the agency has implemented a Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (hereafter, R3) initiative intended to align agency operations with an overall objective of increasing public engagement with Virginia's outdoors through hunting, fishing, recreational shooting, boating, and wildlife viewing. The DWR's relationships with hunters, anglers, and boaters are long-standing, rooted in both agency management of opportunities for hunting, fishing, and boating and the contributions these activities make to the agency through license purchases and excise taxes. Relationships between the DWR and the estimated 2.1 million wildlife viewers in Virginia (USDOL, 2016) are substantially newer and less established. An analysis conducted by agency staff and stakeholders at an R3 workshop in August 2017 identified limited outreach and engagement with wildlife viewers and a perception that the agency is not an advocate for these constituents as threats to the DWR's ability to achieve its R3 objectives and overall mission (DWR, n.d.). To improve engagement, understanding, and support between wildlife viewers and the agency, in 2018, DWR staff initiated human dimensions research and a participatory planning process designed to help the agency better serve Virginia's many and diverse wildlife viewers. This Wildlife Viewing Plan (hereafter, the plan) is a product of those efforts.

ABOUT THE VIRGINIA DWR WILDLIFE VIEWING PLAN

This Wildlife Viewing Plan is the first comprehensive plan for engaging with and supporting wildlife viewing developed for the DWR. It includes a value statement, broad goals, and specific objectives to orient the DWR's efforts related to wildlife viewing through 2031. The plan is not an operational plan, in that it does not prescribe specific actions to be taken by the agency. Rather, it is a strategic plan that provides the agency with direction and priorities and then relies on the experience and expertise of agency staff and partners to define and implement specific strategies and tactics that will fulfill the values and achieve the goals outlined here for wildlife viewing in Virginia. In addition to providing standalone guidance, this plan provides a basis for the development of an operational R3 plan for wildlife viewing.

How the Plan was Developed

DWR initiated a multi-faceted process to develop this Wildlife Viewing Plan that included a participatory planning process and a three-part study of wildlife recreationists. Consistent with its mission "to serve the needs of the Commonwealth," the DWR uses stakeholder engagement to ensure that agency activities are informed by public interests. In addition to broad public engagement through public meetings and public comment periods on new regulations, since 1999 the DWR has worked with researchers at Virginia Tech to assemble a Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) for many new

management plans developed by the agency. These SACs represent a cross-section of Virginians with diverse interests in the various natural resources covered by these plans. In each case, the SAC has been responsible for establishing the values and broad goals that undergird the management plan, while a team of agency professionals, or Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), has been responsible for developing specific objectives and management strategies based on those goals (Lafon, 2004). Researchers from Virginia Tech have been involved in designing, facilitating, and evaluating the engagement process and in editing and formatting final plans. Beginning with the first Deer Management Plan in 1999, this process has now been implemented for the management of populations of white-tailed deer, elk, wild turkey, black bear, and stocked trout. It has also been used to consider agency approaches to hound hunting, and now, efforts to support wildlife viewing.

This Wildlife Viewing Plan was jointly developed by a 15-member Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), composed of DWR staff, and a 14-member Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC), composed of individuals and organizational representatives with experience and interest in wildlife viewing in Virginia (**Appendix A**). The SAC and TAC met in person twice in 2019 to identify issues related to wildlife viewing in Virginia and to develop the values statement and goals for the plan (see **Part V**). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the planning process was transitioned to a web-based format between March and July 2020. The SAC and TAC met in a series of six web-meetings to first, affirm the values statement and goals of the Wildlife Viewing Plan, and then, discuss general directions and specific ideas for objectives and strategies under each plan goal. In the course of the planning process, the SAC and TAC conducted an analysis of the conditions that may shape the success of the plan, referred to as a SWOT analysis, to reflect strategic consideration of internal strengths and weaknesses, and external opportunities and threats. This process was similarly used in the development of DWR's R3 plan, which recommends that a SWOT analysis be conducted for each R3 activity, including wildlife viewing (DWR, n.d.).

Individuals from the TAC and the Virginia Tech team worked with content from these joint meetings to write the objectives and strategies and a complete Wildlife Viewing Plan. The rich and innovative ideas that emerged from the planning meetings for specific, actionable steps DWR could take to increase participation in wildlife viewing and conservation and engagement between wildlife viewers and the agency were organized into a list of potential tactics (**Appendix B**). The plan document was reviewed and revised by the full SAC and TAC in October 2020, and then presented to the Virginia Board of Wildlife Resources in January 2021. With Board approval, the draft plan was posted online for a 30-day public input period beginning February 1, 2021. Written and electronic public comments will be considered in a final plan revision.

For many DWR plans, this participatory planning process has been combined with survey research and/or focus groups to generate broader understanding of public behavior and interests and to inform plan goals, objectives, and strategies. The planning process for this Wildlife Viewing Plan occurred in concert with an agency-supported wildlife recreation study (see **Part IV**), consisting of focus groups (Grooms et al. 2019), a web-based stakeholder analysis (Tsang et al. *in review*), and a survey distributed to a random sample of Virginia residents and to recreationists currently connected to DWR through license sales, agency communications, or citizen science (Grooms et al. 2020). These research activities were approved by and conducted in compliance with the requirements of the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (Protocol #17-754). Data collected through this research were shared by the Virginia Tech team during combined SAC and TAC planning meetings to facilitate the development of data-driven goals, objectives, and strategies for the plan. Results from each component of the study are described in detail in the reports cited above; they are also integrated into this planning document, where relevant.

Interim Changes to the Plan

This Plan was developed to reflect enduring values related to wildlife viewing in Virginia, and is based on conversations that specifically anticipated future conditions internal and external to the agency that might shape the success of this Plan. It is thus expected that this plan will provide relevant guidance and priorities for engagement between the DWR and wildlife viewers through 2031. However, like other DWR management plans, this plan is intended to be a dynamic and flexible tool which remains responsive to changing social, environmental, technical, and administrative conditions. This plan is also intended to be accompanied by ongoing assessment of progress towards plan goals (see **Part VI**), and it is expected that the data generated from evaluation will be integrated into future plan implementation and updates. Thus, specific objectives and strategies may be added, deleted, or amended by the DWR as new circumstances demand. Recognizing the importance of adaptive changes in management approaches, the SAC endorsed this flexibility in updating objectives and strategies before 2031. DWR staff will submit changes to plan goals to the SAC for review before implementing changes, and updates will be provided as addenda to the Plan on the agency website.

Plan Format

The following sections of this Wildlife Viewing Plan summarize the current state of wildlife viewing in Virginia and provide the agency with guidance on supporting wildlife viewing activities in the future.

Part II presents background information on trends in wildlife viewing across the United States and within Virginia, drawn from national-level surveys of outdoor recreationists. **Part III** provides an overview of the ways in which the DWR is connected to wildlife viewers across the state through funding streams, programs, services, and resources. **Part IV** summarizes the three components of the Wildlife Recreation Study conducted to inform the plan. **Part V** contains values, goals, objectives, and strategies co-produced by agency staff and stakeholders to orient the DWR's engagement with wildlife viewers for the next 10 years. The plan concludes with **Part VI**, which provides an approach to implementation and evaluation of the goals, objectives, and strategies of the Wildlife Viewing Plan. **Appendices** to the plan contain a list of SAC and TAC members; suggested tactics for implementation of plan strategies; and a record of public comments submitted in response to the draft Wildlife Viewing Plan.

A photograph of a man with a backpack and a camera, looking up in a forest. The man is wearing a blue and white plaid shirt and a backpack. He is holding a camera with a large lens. The background is a blurred forest scene with green foliage and trees.

Part II

Wildlife Viewing in the U.S. and Virginia

WILDLIFE VIEWING IN THE U.S.

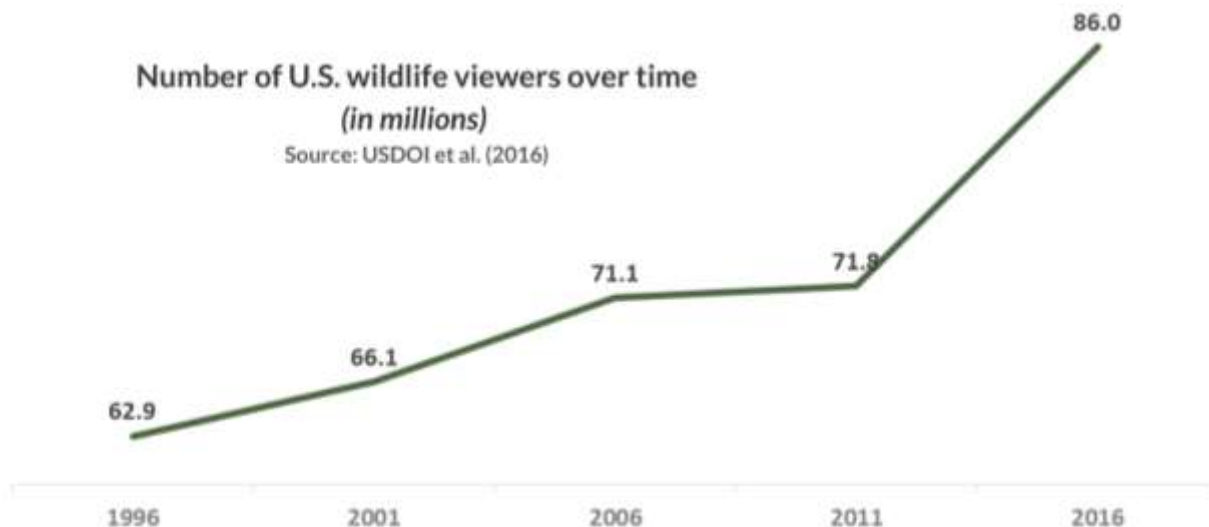
Defining wildlife viewing

Wildlife viewing, or wildlife watching, is one of the most popular outdoor recreation activities in the United States. This Wildlife Viewing Plan considers anyone who *intentionally observes, photographs, feeds, or collects data about wildlife*; visits parks and natural areas because of wildlife; or maintains plantings and natural areas for the benefit of wildlife to be a “wildlife viewer,” with “wildlife” referring to all animals that live in natural or wild environments, including in urban and semi-urban spaces. This definition is an adaptation of the definition of “wildlife watching” used by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation (hereafter, National Survey) to explicitly include data collection as a wildlife viewing activity. Feeding wildlife is included as a wildlife viewing activity under this plan in order to be consistent with the National Survey and to capture the common practice of feeding wild birds. While the DWR provides guidance on responsibly feeding wild birds, the agency recognizes that improving habitat is a preferred and sustainable alternative to support wildlife populations, since diverse, native plant communities provide wildlife with natural food sources as well as cover. Additionally, state law prohibits feeding bears year-round and feeding deer and elk during certain seasons (and some localities have year-round regulations against feeding deer and elk). It is also illegal across Virginia to feed any wild animal when the feeding results in property damage, endangers people or wildlife, or creates a public health concern. The National Survey also separately considers activities done away from home (traveling at least 1 mile from home for the primary purpose of participating in these activities) and those done at or around home (taking a special interest in wildlife within 1 mile of home) (USDOI et al. 2016).



National-level trends in wildlife viewing

The 2016 National Survey reported that there are approximately 86 million wildlife watchers aged 16 or older in the U.S. – more than one-third of the adult population (USDOI et al. 2016). Other recent surveys have put the number of U.S. wildlife viewers as low as 21 million, though only away-from-home viewing was considered (Outdoor Foundation 2019), and as high as 190 million, without intentionality taken into account (Bowker et al. 2012). The total number of wildlife viewers in the U.S. has been increasing since the mid-1990s (Cordell et al. 2008; USDOI et al. 2016). The USFWS reported 14.3 million additional viewers between 2011 and 2016, increasing the national participation rate from 30 to 34%. This increase comes primarily from a rise in around-the-home wildlife viewing (USDOI et al., 2016), while away-from-home wildlife viewing rates have remained stable (Outdoor Foundation, 2019; USDOI et al., 2016).



In contrast to viewing, hunting rates declined (Cordell et al., 2008; USDOI et al., 2016), or at least remained stable (Outdoor Foundation, 2019), during this time period. Today, there are 11.5 million hunters in the U.S., compared to 14.1 million in 1996 (USDOI et al., 2016); the total number of hunting days per year has similarly declined (Mockrin, Aiken, & Flather, 2012). Rates of participation in angling in the U.S. consistently fall between those of viewing and hunting, and appear to be mostly stable over time (Cordell et al., 2008; Outdoor Foundation, 2019; USDOI et al., 2016). Considering demographic, economic, climatic, and land use changes, the US Forest Service projects a decline in participation rates for hunting and angling over the next four decades (Bowker et al. 2012). Wildlife viewing, conversely, is predicted to maintain its high participation rate even as the US population expands (Bowker et al. 2012).

Demographic patterns in wildlife viewing

The demographic composition of the U.S. outdoor recreation community differs from that of the U.S. public, with patterns varying by type of activity (Cordell, 2012; Outdoor Foundation, 2019; USDOI et al., 2016). Among wildlife viewers in particular, Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC; also referred to as ethno-racial minority groups), urban residents, young people, and low-income people are all underrepresented at the national level (Lee & Scott, 2011; USDOI et al., 2016). The most widely-cited explanations for the underrepresentation of BIPOC in outdoor recreation include socioeconomic disadvantage (e.g. Solop et al., 2003), cultural differences (e.g. Krymkowski et al., 2014), language barriers (e.g. Fernandez, Shinew, & Stodolska, 2015), and experiences with discrimination (e.g. Krymkowski et al., 2014). In the context of birding, Robinson (2005) also posits that underrepresentation of BIPOC may be self-perpetuating within social networks; individuals are unlikely to begin birding if they are not introduced to the activity by someone they know, and they are then unlikely to introduce others to it. Meanwhile, factors including user fees for visiting outdoor areas may limit recreation participation for low-income individuals (More & Stevens, 2000). Importantly, constraints to participation in wildlife watching are compounded among people who belong to multiple underrepresented groups, for example, Black people in urban areas or Hispanic young adults without a college education (Lee & Scott, 2011).

In contrast to other forms of wildlife-associated recreation, particularly hunting and fishing, the gender distribution among wildlife viewers has historically been evenly divided between men and women (USDOI et al., 2006; Moore et al., 2008). However, the National Survey reported that in 2016, 42% of around-the-home viewers and only 33% of away-from-home viewers were female (USDOI et al., 2016). These newer trends are consistent with studies of birders that found that women are often more casual in their birding activities (McFarlane & Boxall, 1996) and more constrained by factors, such as safety concerns, that apply to away-from-home viewing (Johnson et al., 2001). While gender patterns in wildlife viewing are complex, social research has made it clear that women engage with wildlife and in wildlife viewing differently than men and with different motives. Compared to men, women value wildlife more for aesthetic, ethical, and emotional reasons (Miller & McGee, 2000). They also tend to focus less on developing skills and competing (Cooper & Smith, 2010) and more on the conservation-oriented aspects of viewing (Scott et al., 2005).

Activities and expenditures of U.S. wildlife viewers

A growing body of literature shows that wildlife viewers contribute to conservation, financially and through other conservation behaviors (Cooper et al., 2015; Hvenegaard, 2002; McFarlane & Boxall, 1996). Even without purchasing licenses and permits, they have a significant economic impact. Nationally, viewers spend nearly \$76 billion annually on travel and equipment associated with their activities, including \$170 million in access fees for public lands (USDOI et al., 2016). Beyond its conservation potential, wildlife viewing is also a means of connecting more Americans to nature, which has been recognized as increasingly important in light of the physical, mental, and social benefits that people incur by spending time outdoors (Kellert et al., 2017). Wildlife viewers are therefore important stakeholders in the missions of wildlife agencies, especially as participation in hunting and its associated revenues decline.

Virginia's wildlife and wildlife viewing opportunities

Virginia is an exceptional destination for wildlife viewing. With its central latitude, relatively mild climate, elevations spanning from the Atlantic Coastal Plain to the Appalachian Mountains, and geographic position along the Atlantic Flyway, the Commonwealth contains a wealth of natural diversity. Virginia offers wildlife viewers the opportunity to observe 400 species of birds, 150 species of mammals, 150 species of amphibians and reptiles, 226 species of freshwater fish, plus over 2,000 butterfly, dragonfly, and other invertebrate species. Virginia's most popular wildlife for viewing include everything from large mammals such as elk, black bear, and whales; to striking birds such as majestic bald eagles and colorful warblers and tanagers; to small charismatic fauna, such as box turtles, green tree frogs, and monarch butterflies. Previous surveys have revealed that Virginians value viewing opportunities for game species as well as nongame species, with particular interest in seeing deer (McMullin et al., 2000) and black bears (Responsive Management, 2010).

Virginia's waterways provide opportunities to view a variety of aquatic wildlife species, from crayfish and turtles, to more challenging species such as darters and freshwater mussels. These activities include simply viewing aquatic wildlife from land, perhaps using polarized sunglasses and binoculars, as well as using viewscopes to see beneath the water or snorkeling with a mask. Larger aquatic species, such as brook trout and shad can be seen without ever entering the water, while darters and mussels are easier to view if you are willing to get wet.

With its location on the Atlantic Flyway, one of the wildlife viewing highlights in Virginia is the opportunity to observe spring and fall bird migrations. Each spring, warblers and other neotropical songbirds travel north through Virginia, returning to North America for their breeding season after spending their winter in Central and South America. This annual journey presents a marvelous opportunity to experience the colors and sounds of spring migration. Many of these songbirds migrate at night, and, as they pass through the Commonwealth, they seek patches of forest as stopovers to rest and replenish their energy. Places like Virginia's National Wildlife Refuges, State Parks, Wildlife Management Areas, and local nature trails can be ideal places to spot these migrants. Fall presents an additional opportunity to see these songbirds as they pass through the Commonwealth on their return journey south for the winter. Virginia's Eastern Shore, located at the tip of the Delmarva Peninsula, is a particularly spectacular location for viewing fall bird migration; it is one of the most important bird migration areas in North America. The unique narrowing shape of the Peninsula funnels migrating birds and butterflies down towards the Eastern Shore's southern tip each fall, producing the opportunity to observe an abundance of raptors, songbirds, and monarch butterflies. Fall also provides an opportunity to observe raptor migration. Raptors migrate during the daytime, providing great viewing opportunities as they soar high in the air. The best places to see migrating raptors in the fall is at Virginia's designated fall Hawkwatch sites, the majority of which are located in the mountains. In addition, a fall Hawkwatch, operated by Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory in Kiptopeke State Park on the Eastern Shore, provides one of the best vantage points in the U.S. to view the raptor migration.

State-level trends in wildlife viewing

Consistent with national trends, patterns of participation in outdoor recreation in Virginia are shifting. According to the Virginia report for the most recent version of the National Survey (Rockville Institute, 2020), there are 2.1 million wildlife viewers in Virginia, which comprises about 35% of the state's

population. For comparison, in 2016, it was estimated that there were 957,000 anglers and 259,000 hunters in Virginia, a combined 16% of the population (Rockville Institute, 2020). Since 1991, the estimated number of wildlife viewers in the state has increased slightly, while the estimated number of both anglers and hunters declined (USDOI, 1991; Rockville Institute, 2020). These trends are reflected in a general decline in both hunting and fishing license sales in Virginia over the past decade (DWR, 2020). High participation in wildlife viewing in Virginia has also been observed in other state recreation surveys. For instance, according to the America's Wildlife Values Virginia State Report (Dietsch et al., 2018), 77% of their 578

respondents indicated they were interested in viewing wildlife in the future. Of those interested in future viewing, 22% were actively participating in wildlife viewing, and 51% had never participated in wildlife viewing before. While not specifically focused on wildlife viewing, in the most recent version of the Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey (DCR, 2017), 71% of households had participated in "visiting natural areas," which was about a 20% increase from the previous report (2011). Additionally, boating license sales have continued to increase in Virginia. While this is not necessarily a reflection of an increase in wildlife viewing, boating provides opportunities for purposeful and casual wildlife viewing.

Demographic patterns of underrepresentation among wildlife viewers at the national scale are largely reflected on the state level as well. Compared to the larger Virginia population (USCB, 2018), Virginia wildlife viewers were on average more White (83% vs. 71%), less Hispanic (6% vs. 10%), more male (54% vs. 49%), older (71% vs. 53% older than 44), wealthier (44% vs. 36% with an annual income over \$100,000), and more educated (41% vs. 36% with a college degree) (Rockville Institute, 2020).

Activities and expenditures of Virginia's wildlife viewers

Nearly all of Virginia's wildlife viewers view wildlife around their homes, while 46% of viewers in the state traveled a mile or further away from home for their viewing activities in 2016 (*Note: some viewers participate in both away-from-home and around-the-home viewing, so totals do not sum to 100%*). These viewers had a combined total of 251 million days participating in wildlife viewing in 2016, and took 24 million trips for their wildlife viewing activities (Rockville Institute, 2020). In 2016, Virginia wildlife viewers spent over \$3.2 billion for their wildlife viewing activities, both in and out of the state, resulting in an average expenditure of \$1,559 per viewer. About a third of these dollars were spent on equipment and other supplies, including equipment for viewing, camping, and backpacking; costs associated with leasing or owning land; membership dues and contributions; and informational materials. The remaining 66% of expenditures went to trip-related expenses, such as food and lodging, transportation, and access fees for public and private lands (Rockville Institute, 2020). This 2016 estimate of expenditures is a dramatic increase compared to the 2011 iteration of the National Survey Virginia report, which estimated that Virginia viewers had a total expenditure of \$1.0 billion for their viewing activities, with an average expenditure of only \$474 per viewer (USDOI et al., 2011).





Part III

Agency Engagement with Wildlife Viewers

WILDLIFE VIEWING AND STATE FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES

Wildlife viewers, as a substantial and growing proportion of the U.S. public, have significant potential to engage with and contribute to the work of fish and wildlife agencies. However, consumptive recreationists (i.e., hunters and anglers) have long been the primary stakeholders for wildlife agencies. Their social, political, and financial contributions provide critical support to agency conservation efforts, a paradigm that is central to the participation-supported North American Model of Wildlife Conservation (Mahoney & Jackson III, 2013). Indeed, hunters spend over \$825 million annually, and anglers over \$586 million, on licenses and permits alone (USDOI et al., 2016). However, the North American Model also holds that wildlife is not privately owned, but rather is held in trust by the government (Organ et al., 2012). Under this Public Trust Doctrine, wildlife agencies exist to serve all beneficiaries of wildlife resources; this responsibility is often considered at odds with the North American Model's traditional prioritization of consumptive recreationists (Jacobson et al., 2010; Serfass et al., 2018) and the underrepresentation of certain demographic groups within wildlife agencies' constituencies.

There are now renewed calls for wildlife agencies to consider more diverse beneficiaries, including wildlife viewers, in agency planning and decision-making (Decker et al., 2016; AFWA & WMI, 2019). However, there are considerable challenges to more meaningful engagement between agencies and groups such as wildlife viewers, that may think about, value, and interact with wildlife quite differently than do agency staff and traditional hunting and angling constituents. To help wildlife agencies meet the needs of new and diverse constituencies, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) and Wildlife Management Institute (WMI) released the *Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap: Enhanced Conservation through Broader Engagement* (hereafter, Relevancy Roadmap) in 2019 (AFWA & WMI, 2019). This guidance document describes 19 barriers emerging from agency capacity and culture,

constituent capacity and culture, and political and legal constraints on agency actions that currently limit the relevance of and support for wildlife conservation among the public. For example, these barriers include the perception that fish and wildlife agencies are focused solely on hunters and anglers and that agencies have limited capacity to understand and plan for engagement with other constituencies. The Relevancy Roadmap also presents strategies, tactics, and specific steps for overcoming each barrier, consistently highlighting the need for adaptation, collaboration, and the application of social science to collect information about the needs and interests of diverse agency beneficiaries.

Importantly, the Relevancy Roadmap emphasizes that “Agencies will continue to provide information, services, and opportunities to those who are already engaged and who provide important support for agencies and their conservation work. The importance of engaging and serving broader constituencies cannot be at the expense of leaving behind or alienating existing and long-term allies like hunters and anglers” (AFWA & WMI, 2019, p.15). This Wildlife Viewing Plan embodies implementation of the underlying philosophy of the Relevancy Roadmap and many of its strategies. While it focuses on expanding agency support of wildlife viewing activities, this plan does not detract from current agency support for other activities, such as hunting, fishing, and boating. In fact, many of the strategies and tactics in this plan, including supporting youth engagement with wildlife; improving communications about agency lands and waters; and bolstering agency volunteer opportunities will directly benefit all people in the Commonwealth who enjoy Virginia’s wildlife and the natural areas managed by the DWR.

The following section of this plan details existing relationships and mutual relevance between the DWR and Virginia’s wildlife viewers, including the ways in which DWR’s conservation and management activities directly support wildlife viewing and the ways in which wildlife viewers help the agency advance wildlife and habitat conservation. **Part IV** then presents an overview of the research DWR has contracted in an effort to better understand wildlife viewers in Virginia, followed by the agency’s operational plan for enhancing engagement with this constituency in **Part V**.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DWR AND WILDLIFE VIEWING

The DWR has been working to conserve nongame species and support opportunities for wildlife viewing for more than forty years. The agency’s work with nongame species – those that are neither hunted, trapped, nor fished – began slowly, with origins in scientific projects focused on single wildlife species. The Department began funding bald eagle nest surveys in the 1970s and was instrumental in the federal listing of the bald eagle as endangered in 1978. The agency has worked ever since to help restore the state’s population of this species to where it is today. In the mid-1980s, the Department reinforced its commitment to the conservation of all wildlife in Virginia by establishing the Nongame Wildlife Program and dedicating staff and resources to nongame species. From 1985-1989, the agency partnered with the Virginia Society of Ornithology to conduct the first Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas. These efforts opened the door to DWR’s engagement with additional recreationists, beyond the agency’s long-standing hunting and fishing constituencies. In 1996, Virginia became the first eastern state to begin a NatureMapping Program (called Wildlife Mapping in Virginia) to engage citizen scientists in collecting wildlife observations.

Watchable Wildlife Program

In 1998, House Bill 38 was passed in the State legislature. This bill dedicated a portion of the state sales tax on outdoor equipment to DWR, beginning in 2000. More than a hundred groups supported this

legislation, including many outside the traditional hunting or fishing constituents. House Bill 38 provided financial support for species and programs that were not supported by other funding mechanisms, and the agency used this transfer money to develop the first Watchable Wildlife Program in 2001. The goal of DWR's Watchable Wildlife Program is to increase support for wildlife conservation by providing and promoting opportunities for wildlife viewing and nature appreciation. The Watchable Wildlife Program has historically served three key functions: 1) promoting nature tourism, 2) providing interpretation of wildlife and habitats, and 3) facilitating opportunities for citizen science. Initially, the DWR employed two Watchable Wildlife Biologists, located in different regions of Virginia, and a Watchable Wildlife Manager. However, between 2014 and 2019, the program was coordinated by a single biologist, located in DWR's Chesapeake District Office. This biologist coordinated the statewide Virginia Bird and Wildlife Trail (VBWT), wildlife viewing-related digital media, and led and implemented programming in DWR's Region 1. A second Watchable Wildlife Biologist position was hired in the program in the spring of 2020. The two biologists now work together to lead and implement wildlife viewing programs throughout the Commonwealth. Watchable Wildlife Biologists have diverse expertise and backgrounds, with a combination of skills in wildlife biology, wildlife conservation, communication, and education. This interdisciplinary background is essential for leading the diverse facets of the program, which are described in more detail in the sections below.

Wildlife Viewing in the DWR's R3 Plan

In 2017, the Department joined in a nationwide effort to recruit, retain, and reactivate (R3) people into outdoor recreation. The effort was a result of the continued decline in hunter and angler participation numbers and the need to provide continued and stable funding for state fish and wildlife agencies. Virginia DWR recognized that 1) hunter, angler, and boater numbers would likely not rebound to historic levels and 2) many others in addition to these traditional constituents appreciate wildlife, participate in wildlife recreation, and share the Department's mission to conserve wildlife in Virginia. Virginia DWR was the first state agency to include wildlife viewing at the same level of hunting and angling in an R3 plan, along with recreational shooting sports and boating which the agency also manages. Inclusion of wildlife viewing as an R3 activity facilitates strategic planning about how to recruit, retain, and reactivate participants in wildlife viewing under the framework of the Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model. This conceptual model is used widely by fish and wildlife agencies to strategically consider the phases that individuals progress through as they adopt new recreation activities and then become fully involved. Prior to the R3 plan, the wildlife viewing program had consisted of a set of activities or products that the DWR produced for the wildlife viewing *customer*. With the inclusion of wildlife viewing in the R3 plan, the DWR recognized and made public the importance of the wildlife viewing audience as a *stakeholder* and equal partner that should participate in and contribute to the DWR's decision-making processes. The Virginia DWR contracted with VT to develop this recreational plan to provide guidance for including recreationists who view wildlife as stakeholders and partners in the mission to conserve, connect and protect wildlife, people, and property.



HOW THE DWR MISSION SUPPORTS WILDLIFE VIEWING

The DWR supports wildlife viewing through all facets of the agency's mission to conserve, connect, and protect. The agency broadly supports wildlife viewing by conserving and managing habitat on DWR lands; providing support for habitat conservation on private lands; and conducting research and management of wildlife species. The Department has continued to *connect* people to Virginia's outdoors and wildlife through the creation of the Virginia Bird and Wildlife Trail, live streaming wildlife cameras, educational materials, support of wildlife viewing festivals, providing and funding wildlife viewing amenities, and outreach via social media and print. Finally, the DWR works to *protect* people and property by managing human-wildlife conflict and promoting safe outdoor experiences. The following sections detail some of the ways in which the DWR supports participation in wildlife viewing through the conservation and management of habitat that supports diverse wildlife communities; research on and conservation of wildlife species; infrastructure and events for nature tourism; interpretation of wildlife and habitats; and wildlife and conservation education.

*Conserve and manage
wildlife populations and
habitat for the benefit
of present and future
generations*



HABITAT CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

The lands owned and managed by the DWR are a critical resource for engaging people with wildlife. The DWR manages Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), as well as fish hatcheries, boat ramps, and lakes. The land associated with each of these properties could be, and in some cases already is, used to support wildlife viewing activities.

Wildlife Management Areas

As indicated in Virginia's 2015 Wildlife Action Plan (DWR, 2015), the loss or degradation of habitats constitutes the most serious threat to the sustainable management and conservation of Virginia's wildlife. In order to conserve and manage high-quality habitats that support healthy and diverse populations of Virginia's wildlife species, the DWR maintains a statewide system of [wildlife management areas](#) (WMAs) and an associated habitat management program. The DWR acquired its first WMA in the 1930s to conserve habitat through the purchase of large tracts of land for habitat management and waterfowl refuges. As of 2020, the agency manages 46 WMAs, comprising over 200,000 acres across Virginia.

Most of Virginia's WMAs were purchased, in part, with funds from the USFWS' Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Program (WSFR), and practices used to achieve management goals are supported primarily through funds generated from hunting, fishing, and trapping license sales and Federal grant programs,



especially those administered by the USFWS. As a condition of receiving grants for land acquisition, the WSFR program requires DWR to define the purpose (e.g., habitat conservation, endangered species restoration, hunting access, fishing access) for which the property is to be purchased. That defined purpose establishes the stated management intent in perpetuity or until the original purpose is successfully achieved. DWR's primary management objective on WMAs is to conserve and manage high-quality wildlife habitats that support healthy and diverse populations of Virginia's native wildlife. All uses, including hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and other human activities, are secondary and must be compatible with this primary goal.

Where feasible and compatible with the DWR's conservation goals, the WMA program facilitates public access to habitats on WMAs and the wildlife resources they support. Some WMAs are supported by volunteer friends groups who help maintain WMAs as multi-use recreation areas. Though WMAs are open to the public, visitors are currently required to possess a hunting, fishing, or trapping license; a Restore the Wild membership (see "Financial Support" below); or a standalone WMA access permit. Restore the Wild Membership and the WMA access permit provide ways for Virginians who do not otherwise pay into the system to fully participate in funding the management and conservation of these public lands. The membership and permit fees are set at the same amount as a standard hunting or fishing license.

Many citizens of the Commonwealth view WMAs as places to experience wildlife habitats at their very best (DWR, 2011). Surveys of users in 2010 showed that the top uses of WMAs included hunting (54% of visitors), fishing (22%), sighting-in firearms (13%), hiking or walking (11%), and viewing wildlife (6%) (DWR, 2011). Other, less-frequent uses include wildflower viewing and nature-related photography. The uses vary based on the specific resources available on each property, the availability of other public lands in the area, seasonality, and the proximity of the WMAs to larger population bases.

WMAs have the potential to provide viewers with an extensive and well-distributed public land base across the Commonwealth that can complement the network of other public lands such as National Wildlife Refuges, National Forests, National Parks, and state and local parks. Of the DWR's 46 WMAs, 32 are currently designated as sites on the Virginia Bird and Wildlife Trail (see below), with an additional WMA being added to this network in 2020. The DWR's WMAs are also designated as eBird hotspots. These public birding locations allow birders to associate their observations with the hotspot, generating aggregated results on bird diversity in that location. On many WMA hotspots, over one hundred bird species have been identified by citizen scientists. Hog Island WMA, a 3,908-acre peninsula on the James River with a diversity of habitats, attracts a vast number of birds across all seasons; eBirders have identified 273 species on this WMA and submitted almost 2,000 eBird checklists.

While WMAs offer prime viewing habitat, amenities and infrastructure on these properties are very limited, by design. Some WMAs have a network of roads, but the majority are unpaved and many are behind permanently or seasonally closed gates, such that they may best be navigated by foot. There are no restrooms or visitor centers, and signage is minimal, although WMAs do have kiosks and some interpretive signage. However, in contrast to many public lands on which visitors are encouraged to stick to the trails, venturing off-road by foot is allowed on WMAs.

A handful of agency projects have enhanced amenities available on WMAs to support wildlife viewing opportunities. In 2019, Watchable Wildlife staff worked in coordination with other DWR staff to develop multimedia interpretation and communications on Red-cockaded Woodpecker (RCWs) in recognition of the arrival of a nesting pair at Big Woods WMA. These interpretive communication efforts included the development of an RCW viewing area at the WMA, with interpretive and directional signage; an RCW webpage on the DWR website with natural history and conservation information about the birds; a series of blog articles announcing the arrival of the pair and following their nesting season; a press release; and an article for *Virginia Wildlife* magazine. The agency has undertaken significant habitat restoration work for Golden-winged Warblers and Cerulean Warblers at Highland WMA. At G. Richard Thompson WMA, interpretive signage on high altitude forest birds has been installed, and the WMA supports wildflower viewing in the spring, featuring large-flowered trillium. Two observation platforms were installed at Hog Island WMA to provide viewers with additional photography and wildlife viewing opportunities, and a boardwalk, viewing platform and trail, financed through the Nongame Wildlife and Endangered Species Program, allows easy walking access for viewing the marsh at Ragged Island WMA.

Boating Access Sites and Facilities

The DWR's Boating Access Program is administered by the Lands and Access Program, and includes maintenance and management of approximately 230 boating access sites across Virginia. These sites provide access to opportunities to view wildlife from power boats as well as paddlecraft. Target species include wading birds such as herons and egrets, bald eagles and osprey, and a variety of shorebirds and seabirds, as well as amphibians and reptiles, especially turtles, snakes, and frogs. Mammals, including deer, beaver, and raccoon may also be viewed from the water. It should be noted that activities not directly related to the launching or landing of boats and fishing are prohibited at DWR boat ramps, due to the funding mechanisms utilized for the construction, upkeep, and maintenance of these facilities.

Fish Hatcheries and Public Fishing Lakes

The DWR manages over 176,000 acres of public lakes and 27,300 miles of fishable streams, as well as nine fish hatcheries (5 coldwater and 4 warmwater). The agency's public fishing lakes provide great opportunities for viewing waterfowl, aquatic mammals, aquatic flowers and other plants, and a myriad of other aquatic species. These properties have a variety of opportunities to either view from the shore

or launch a canoe or kayak and view from the water. In addition, pollinator habitat and interpretive signage has been installed at Lake Shenandoah and Vic Thomas State Fish Hatchery to promote both the recruitment of pollinators and connections between visitors and these wildlife. Fish food vending machines are also available at most DWR fish hatcheries, and there is a nature trail with interpretive signage has been established at the Montebello Fish Hatchery. The DWR's fish hatcheries are distributed across Virginia: the King and Queen Hatchery is located in eastern Virginia, the Front Royal Hatchery is in Northern Virginia, the Vic Thomas Hatchery is Southside and the Marion, Wytheville and Buller Hatcheries in Southwest Virginia. Fish hatcheries are open to the public, but require an Agency Access Permit, Restore the Wild Membership, or any basic license from the Department.



Virginia DWR's Private Lands Habitat Assistance Program

Over 80% of land in Virginia is privately-owned, and the DWR's work with Virginia's private landowners is important in accomplishing its mission. The DWR has a long history of working with private landowners to accomplish their habitat development and conservation goals. Over time, private lands assistance efforts have expanded from relying primarily on District Wildlife Biologists to provide habitat technical assistance, to launching a team of five designated Private Lands Biologists within the Private Lands Habitat Assistance Program to provide that service. These biologists make habitat recommendations and assist landowners with cost-share habitat incentive program enrollment and long-term wildlife planning. While the initial impetus for expanding capacity for private lands work was quail conservation, that mission evolved over time. Of the over 5,000 private landowner site visits Private Lands Biologists have made over the last decade, at least half are for nongame wildlife or pollinators. The landowners assisted through this program have diverse and overlapping wildlife management goals for their property. Quail management remains a focus for many, for the pleasure of



seeing, listening to, or hunting bobwhite. Others using the program simply want more wildlife to watch, photograph and enjoy. It is notable that many people who hunt wildlife and enjoy wild game table fare also love to watch wildlife on their land. The two activities are not mutually exclusive. DWR Private Lands Biologists have many satisfied customers; To quote one, "Not only do I hear and see bobwhite quail in places they haven't been since my youth, but I also enjoy a tremendous number of other species, game and nongame, including woodcock, multiple flycatchers especially Eastern Kingbird, plenty of whip-poor-will, and wild turkey. The deer, rabbits, squirrels and other mammals are likewise prospering." (attrib. Dr. Waring Tribble, Essex County, Virginia).

WILDLIFE RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION

Over the past 50 years, but in many cases going back much further, DWR has conducted (directly or via contract with academic institutions or other organizations) research on the Commonwealth's vast array of wildlife species. This work directly supports agency conservation efforts, has informed the listing of threatened and endangered species, and provides information on the status of wildlife populations for wildlife-related recreation.

Beginning in the mid-1920s, DWR's efforts were focused on white-tailed deer restoration and trout stocking. Later efforts were undertaken to study and restore elk, Northern Bobwhite (quail), beaver, and wild turkey. During the 1960s and 1970s, research expanded again with a significant effort to study Black Bears and promote waterfowl conservation. For the past 50 years or more, DWR has taken a much more comprehensive view of wildlife. Research on non-hunted, declining species, such as Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon, was undertaken to assist in the recovery of these species, even prior to these activities being consolidated into a comprehensive Nongame Wildlife program in 1995. In 2001, DWR began receiving State Wildlife Grants to identify Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and conduct research on these species. SGCN are designated as most in need of conservation action in a state based on their declining population status or the need for more information to better determine their status. As a condition of receiving this annual appropriation, each state was required to develop a State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) with a list of SGCN. By concentrating research and management on these species, an agency could prevent further declines in these species and avert the need to list them later. Over the last two decades, with the assistance of this additional money, DWR has invested heavily to understand the distribution, abundance, and habits of the diverse wildlife species that occur in Virginia's rapidly changing terrestrial, aquatic, subterranean, and marine habitats. These research efforts have informed conservation actions ranging from conservation planning to species propagation/reintroduction and land acquisition. Below is an overview of research projects conducted on nongame wildlife by the DWR prior to and since the advent of the Virginia SWAP. DWR staff communicate about these conservation activities to the public via presentations to clubs, schools, and academics, as well as articles in magazines, radio interviews, and other media.

Freshwater Mussels

The DWR's freshwater mussel restoration program was begun in earnest in the 1990s and is now one of the premier threatened and endangered mussel conservation programs in the country. Fourteen Atlantic Slope mussel species and 36 Tennessee drainage mussel species have been propagated at DWR facilities, of which 41 have been released into rivers and streams across eastern and southwestern Virginia to augment and restore existing mussel populations.

MusselRama is a DWR-led survey conducted annually at large shoals of Upper Tennessee River Basin tributaries in Southwest Virginia. Since 2004, shoals as large as 200 meters in length and 75 meters wide were exhaustively surveyed for species status assessments over a 3-5 day period. Due to the scale of these surveys, assistance has been requested each year from staff members outside of DWR's Region III and other biologists at partnering governmental agencies, private consulting firms, and universities. During this event, the Agency also explains the importance of these natural water filters to the environment and the challenges they have faced. These





surveys have offered mussel viewing and educational opportunities to all attendees, who are able to view and hold upwards of 30 species of mussels throughout the week-long effort. Many students and biologists use these weeks to gain experience observing and working with new mussel species, and they leave with improved identification skills.

Reptiles and Amphibians

A variety of reptiles and amphibians have been studied, including Spotted, Bog, Wood and Snapping turtles, sea turtles, Eastern Hellbenders, Shenandoah Salamander, and Eastern Tiger Salamander. Recent efforts have placed special emphasis on citizen monitoring of the Green Salamander, a priority species under the state's SWAP and a candidate species for potential Endangered Species Act listing. Since 2014, known localities of this species across the state have increased from 10 to more than 150, largely due to citizen reports. These efforts have highlighted that the species is much more widespread and abundant in Virginia than previously thought and has also led to novel natural history findings as a result of citizen observations. These observations resulted in the formal protection of a city park in Norton, VA as a "Green Salamander Sanctuary" – the first of its kind nationally. DWR further engaged with volunteers on amphibian research by acting as the Virginia coordinator of the North American Amphibian Monitoring Program through 2015. Additionally, DWR provides funding and field support to the Virginia Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvage Network, which coordinates sea turtle nest monitoring efforts in the Commonwealth and is administered by the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center Foundation.

Fish

In the 1990s, the DWR initiated its conservation programs for a variety of native, non-sport fish species, including Roanoke Logperch, Candy Darter, Clinch Dace, Pygmy, Orange-fin and Yellowfin Madtoms, and Black-banded Sunfish. Even crayfish and aquatic and terrestrial snails have been the focus of research and conservation projects conducted by the DWR. These efforts generally involve local university research teams coordinating with the DWR's Aquatic Nongame Biologists. While many of these imperiled species are located in the Tennessee drainages of Southwest Virginia, several are in the Atlantic Slope rivers and watersheds. Restoration efforts also now allow for boat trips to watch Atlantic Sturgeon spawning behavior from April to June in the lower James River.

Birds

Over the past five decades, the DWR has both undertaken and partnered on a variety of research, monitoring, and management projects on a diversity of imperiled birds, such as shorebirds (plovers and oystercatchers), colonial waterbirds (terns, skimmers, gulls, waders, etc), secretive marsh birds, raptors (Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle) and landbirds (Golden-winged Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Loggerhead Shrike, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, etc). Conservation efforts arising from this research have resulted in significant progress toward the recovery of many of these birds in Virginia, including Piping and Wilson's Plovers, American Oystercatcher, Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon and Red-cockaded Woodpecker. In addition to these research and conservation efforts, the DWR has funded and guided two Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas projects, the first in the 1980s, and the second beginning in 2016. These efforts have advanced knowledge of the population status and distributional changes of Virginia's breeding birds, while engaging the largest number of volunteers of any DWR citizen science effort to date (see "Virginia Breeding Bird Atlases" section below). DWR also engages annually with citizen scientists by coordinating the North American Breeding Bird Survey for Virginia. Additional DWR research efforts that engaged volunteers in discrete projects include secretive marsh bird surveys in 2007 and canoe-based riparian breeding bird surveys in 2008 (in partnership with the Virginia Society of Ornithology).



Mammals

In addition to the mammals mentioned previously, the DWR has advanced conservation actions impacting a wide range of other mammals. The DWR has been a leader in studying bats and funding bat research, including on the impact of the devastating White-nosed Syndrome on bat populations, and listing several bat species under the Endangered Species Act due to precipitous population declines. DWR specialists have conducted research and worked with partners on species such as Spotted Skunk, Coyote, River Otter, and weasels, as well as lesser-known mammals like Rock Vole, Allegheny Woodrat, Northern Flying Squirrel, and Fisher. DWR has supported research on marine mammals (e.g., whales, seals and dolphins) and, over the last several years, has provided field assistance to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel Winter Seal Haul-out Surveys carried out by the Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Atlantic.

Connect people to Virginia's outdoors through boating, education, fishing, hunting, trapping, wildlife viewing, and other wildlife-related activities



NATURE TOURISM

Promoting nature tourism connects people to wildlife viewing; it illustrates the recreational value of birds and wildlife, while also supporting their conservation. Participation in nature tourism activities increases public awareness and appreciation of wildlife and their habitats. Furthermore, as people travel to seek Virginia's birds, wildlife, and natural habitats, they generate tourism dollars for the state and demonstrate the importance of Virginia's wildlife and habitats to Virginia's economy. When DWR and partners can articulate these recreational and economic benefits, it can garner support for wildlife conservation efforts with some audiences. Due to these conservation benefits, much of the Watchable Wildlife program's work has historically focused on nature tourism through its establishment of the Virginia Bird and Wildlife Trail and by supporting birding and wildlife festivals.

The wealth of natural diversity in Virginia provides abundant recreational options for nature/outdoor travelers to Virginia. A 2019 survey by TravelTrakAmerica found that travelers to Virginia who participated in sports, recreation, and nature/outdoor travel, indicated that they participated in the following activities/sites during their visit to Virginia: National park/ monuments/ recreation areas (28%), beach (25%), State park/ monuments/ recreation areas (24%), rural sightseeing (22%), gardens (13%), wildlife viewing (12%), hiking/backpacking/canyoneering (10%), camping (7%), fishing (7%), and bird watching (6%).

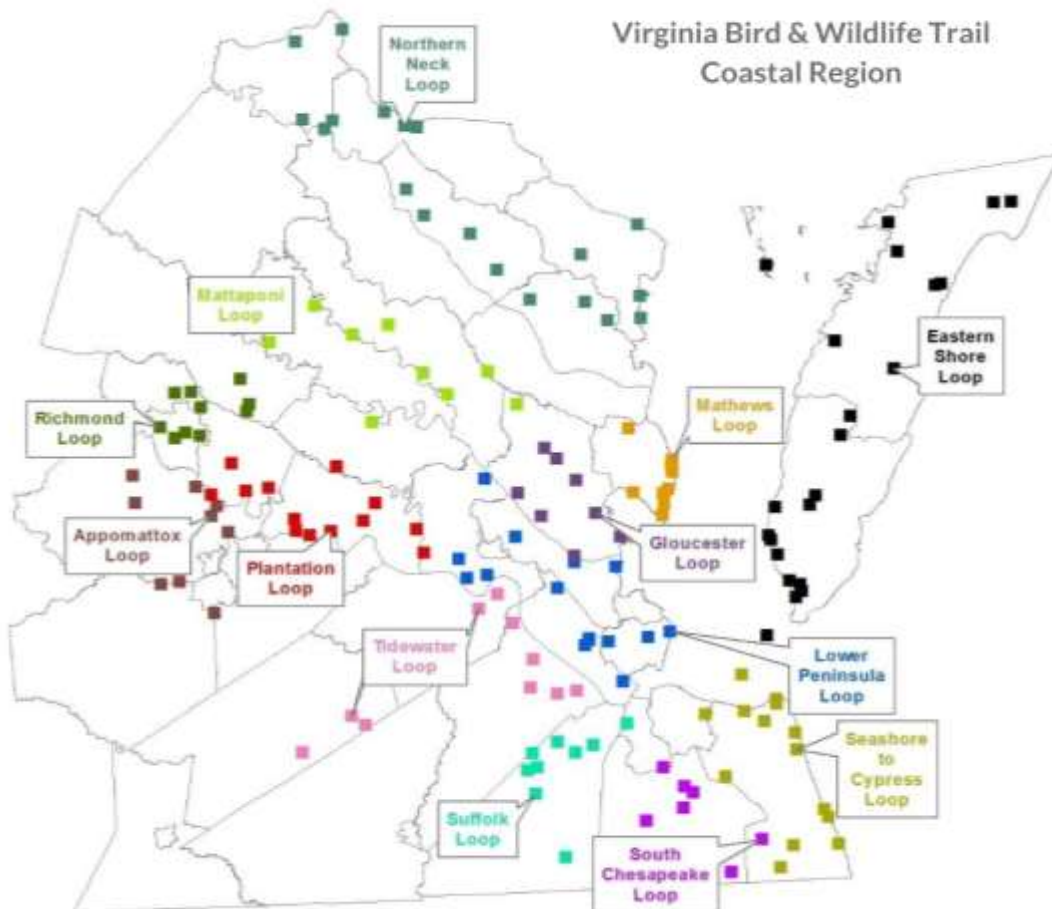
The Virginia Bird and Wildlife Trail

The Virginia Bird and Wildlife Trail (originally named the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail) formed the foundation of the Watchable Wildlife Program and is the program's hallmark. The VBWT is a statewide guide to the best sites for viewing birds and other wildlife in the Commonwealth. It compiles over 600 designated viewing sites into a single resource to help people explore Virginia's outdoors and find its native wildlife; it includes everything from nationally-renowned birding hotspots to favorite local haunts, from city parks to national parks, and from public lands to private bed and breakfasts. In addition to terrestrial sites, the VBWT contains an assortment of publicly accessible water access points that are ideal for launching hand-carried vessels. These sites are included to provide easy access to blueways across the state and an assortment of viewing opportunities both on and under the water's surface. The goal of the VBWT has been to increase awareness, appreciation, and conservation of Virginia's wildlife and native habitats. It strives to accomplish that goal by promoting wildlife viewing as a recreational activity in Virginia and by demonstrating the economic value of wildlife by generating ecotourism dollars. The online guide to the VBWT, housed on the DWR website, was utilized by nearly 200,000

people in 2020. The vast majority of these users are located in Virginia and the mid-Atlantic region, but it is also used by people throughout the U.S.



The idea for the VBWT originated with the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail. A small group of DWR staff traveled to Texas in 2000 to learn more about that state's trail, discuss its impacts on conservation and economic development, and develop an idea for Virginia to provide more targeted opportunities for wildlife viewing. The passage of House Bill 38 in 1998 by the Virginia General Assembly was also critical, creating a mechanism to transfer a portion of the state sales tax collected from the sale of outdoor recreation equipment (as defined every five years in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Survey on Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation) to the DWR. To support the development of the VBWT specifically, DWR applied for multiple Virginia Department of Transportation - Transportation Enhancement Grants (available through the federal TEA-21 program), eventually securing over \$1M in funding to build the statewide trail. In addition, funding was provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Coastal Zone Management Program, coordinated by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, for the Coastal Phase trail guide. The Virginia Tourism Corporation provided considerable in-kind support with marketing and publication distribution.



The designation process for VBWT viewing sites began in earnest in 2001 with the Coastal Phase and culminated with the Piedmont Phase in 2004. Originally, there were over 660 designated sites organized into 65 driving loops. DWR staff made presentations to well over 400 groups and engaged over 500 partner groups during the development of the VBWT. These partners, including nonprofit organizations, state and local tourism groups, local governments, businesses and many more, wrote letters of support for VBWT funding proposals. As part of the development process, the DWR solicited site nominations from all of the partner groups. Nearly 1,000 nominations were submitted and evaluated for inclusion. Fermata, Inc., the consultant that developed the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail, collaborated with the DWR in the development of the VBWT, conducted the site evaluations, and provided feedback about the wildlife at each site and the habitats and viewing experiences available. Once the final sites were selected for designation, DWR staff contacted site owners/managers for a review of their respective site descriptions to ensure they were satisfied with the publication text. Finally, all the sites were organized into loops and those loops were evaluated and modified by the local communities. Surrounding communities were also given the opportunity to submit potential names for their respective loops. Driving directions were included to facilitate navigating from site to site on each loop, since GPS technology was not readily available at the time the VBWT was developed.

With the advent of easy access to GPS technology, navigational apps on cell phones, and the transition to online guides, over time, the loops and the driving directions have become less important. The DWR focuses its efforts now on identifying and promoting the “best” sites in each region. Two versions of the guide are available online – one that is similar in format to the original book, found on the [DWR website](#), and the other is an interactive website, called [Find Wildlife](#). Each VBWT site has its own webpage in the online Find Wildlife guide which includes a detailed description of the site, a list of the types of wildlife present, driving directions, and an indication of available facilities, including whether sites are handicap-accessible. At least 251 VBWT sites (about 39%) have handicap-accessible facilities.

The agency still accepts nominations for new VBWT sites and adds a few new designations each year. The DWR’s Watchable Wildlife Program has developed a series of regional brochures to promote visitation in a few high tourism regions, such as Virginia Beach, the Eastern Shore, Williamsburg, and Richmond. These brochures, which contain a map and short descriptions of each site with viewing tips and seasonal highlights, are distributed at visitor centers, the viewing sites themselves, and at relevant local businesses. More brochures are planned for additional regions of the Commonwealth, pending available funding and sponsors. Rack cards advertising the VBWT and its website are distributed annually throughout the Commonwealth to all of the state-run Welcome Centers and state-certified visitor centers. The DWR also annually advertises the VBWT in the *Virginia Travel Guide*.

Wildlife Viewing Amenities

In order to expand wildlife viewing opportunities in locations across the state, the Watchable Wildlife Program provides technical assistance and/or small grants to localities, and VBWT sites to support the establishment of trails, interpretive signs, and viewing amenities. The grants are provided on an ad hoc basis. Recent examples of this support include technical assistance and the funding of an interpretive sign at the Snicker’s Gap Hawkwatch site in Clarke County and funding support for the development of trails and viewing platforms at Lake Hanover Natural Area in Hanover County. The DWR also partnered with the NOAA Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Program of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and County of Northampton to design and fund the installation of an observation platform at Willis Wharf, on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. This project was intended to enhance ecotourism on the Eastern Shore by supporting viewing of shorebirds and waders, especially during low tides. The DWR

also assisted the CZM Program with the addition of interpretive signage and stationary binoculars on the Willis Wharf platform.

Public Opportunities for Wildlife Recreation (POWRR) Properties

In 2020, the DWR initiated the [Public Opportunities for Wildlife Recreation \(POWRR\) program](#) to facilitate the use of private land for publicly accessible wildlife-dependent recreation activities such as hunting, trapping, fishing, boating, and wildlife viewing. This initiative was launched in an effort to expand and ultimately replace the existing Public Access Lands for Sportsmen (PALS) program, which was historically marketed exclusively to hunters. In 2020, DWR received a \$2.9 million grant from the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA HIP), administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource and Conservation Service. This grant is being used to provide cash incentives to participating landowners for allowing public access to their land, as well as funding needed infrastructure upgrades (e.g. installation of gates, signs, parking lots, wildlife viewing platforms, etc.) and habitat enhancements on participating properties within southwest Virginia. Furthermore, a Wildlife Habitat Biologist was hired in 2020 to oversee these habitat enhancement efforts which may include access control, brush management, early successional habitat management, land clearing, prescribed burning, land reclamation (abandoned mined land), range planting, recreational land grading or shaping, shallow water development and management, stream habitat improvement and management, upland wildlife habitat management, wildlife habitat planting and woody residue treatment.

Between properties enrolled through the PALS program and a previous VPA HIP grant, over 30,000 acres of private land are enrolled in this program and accessible for wildlife-dependent recreation. The program began accepting new landowner applications in October 2020. By 2023, the program is projected to have at least 20 participating landowners with more than 60,000 acres enrolled. This additional acreage will be used for the creation of at least six new public viewing sites for elk, ten new viewing sites for the Virginia Bird and Wildlife Trail, and eight boating access sites for hand-launched vessels.

Wildlife Viewing Festivals

The Watchable Wildlife Program also has a long history of sponsoring and aiding localities in the planning of wildlife viewing festivals, including the Winter Wildlife Festival and Great Dismal Swamp Migration Celebration and the former Eastern Shore Birding & Wildlife Festival, "Gone to the Birds"



Festival, and Mountain Lake Migratory Bird Festival. The benefits of these festivals are many: they provide a celebration of seasonal wildlife events, community and social support to birders and wildlife viewers, an introduction into birding and wildlife viewing for those first exploring these recreational activities, nature tourism benefits to the local communities, and they increase awareness and appreciation for wildlife and natural habitats.

The **Winter Wildlife Festival** in Virginia Beach celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2020. DWR has been a proud sponsor of this annual event since its inception. This festival, which takes place the last weekend of January, is put on by the City of Virginia Beach Department of Parks and Recreation with

support from a variety of agencies and organizations. It celebrates the birds and wildlife that overwinter along Virginia's coast, which includes a wide diversity of waterfowl, seabirds, and sea mammals. Festival participants have the opportunity to register for guided field trips, visit an exhibit hall, learn from wildlife and conservation professionals in a keynote and workshops, and attend children's activities at the partnering City library. The DWR's Watchable Wildlife Program has supported the planning process by participating in the festival steering committee and providing subject matter expertise and coordinating with other DWR staff in leading some of the field trips, setting up an exhibit table, instructing some of the workshops, and helping to judge the photography contest. The 2020 festival was attended by 518 registered field trip and workshop participants, 1500 visitors to its exhibit hall, and 250 attendees at the keynote. It is a very popular and well-liked festival, with 97% of 2020's post-festival survey respondents indicating that they "would attend Winter Wildlife Festival next year."

The ***Great Dismal Swamp Migration Celebration*** (formerly named the Great Dismal Swamp Birding Festival) has occurred at Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge since 2007. Located in Suffolk and Chesapeake, this event occurs over a long weekend at the end of April each year as a celebration of spring migration. The Refuge is one of the best locations in the Commonwealth to observe spring migrants, especially warblers, and birders visit the Refuge in particular for the opportunity to see Swainson's Warbler. DWR was a founding partner of the festival and has supported the Refuge in multiple ways over the years. In the earlier years of the festival, DWR provided sponsorship funds and Watchable Wildlife staff helped with planning efforts on the steering committee, led field trips, instructed workshops, and set up an exhibit booth. In the last few years, the Refuge has sought to simplify the festival with less involvement from partners, however DWR continues to provide annual financial support for the event. Total attendance at festival field trips has consistently been around 500 people in the most recent years.



The ***Mountain Lake Migratory Birding Festival*** was held for approximately 8 years, in the early 2000s, at the Mountain Lake Hotel in Giles County. Mountain Lake is one of only two natural lakes in Virginia and sits atop Salt Pond Mountain at just over 3000 feet elevation. Sitting in the spine of the Allegheny Mountains, this makes it a prime spot for warbler and other passerine migrants in the Spring, as they migrate along the mountains at night. Early mornings often saw huge numbers of birds literally dropping out of the sky at sunrise. The festival often drew upwards of 300-500 people. DWR was one of the inaugural sponsors of this festival along with the New River Valley Bird Club, a local bird store in Blacksburg, and the Mountain Lake Hotel and Resort. Sadly, the major festival organizer Peggy Opengari passed away in 2009, and we could not find another local sponsor to take over the festival.

The ***Eastern Shore Birding & Wildlife Festival*** ran for twenty-four years on Virginia's Eastern Shore, from 1992-2016. Based out of the Town of Cape Charles, this festival occurred over a weekend in early October to celebrate the annual fall migration that occurs along Virginia's Eastern Shore. This festival offered a large number of guided field trips and workshops to view migratory birds and other wildlife, a keynote speaker, an exhibit hall, and family activities at Kiptopeke State Park. Leadership for the festival varied over the years, but was largely run by volunteers with support from local and state agencies. DWR was a founding partner of the festival and was highly involved in it from the outset. The agency provided this festival with major sponsorship funds and planning support from DWR staff who participated in the steering committee and most often fulfilled the role of coordinating the field trips and trip leaders and providing subject expertise. In addition to providing the planning support, DWR staff led field trips, set up a DWR exhibit booth, helped judge the youth poster artwork contest, and helped judge the photography contest. In its final year, 390 people from around the country pre-registered for this festival's field trips; 48% of its paid participants were from outside of Virginia and 80% were from outside of the Eastern Shore. The festival ended when a local entity or volunteer could no longer be found to organize the event.

The ***"Gone to the Birds Festival"*** occurred for three years in downtown Richmond from 2008 - 2010. The event was held by the Richmond Audubon Society and the City of Richmond to highlight the spectacular phenomenon of over 30,000 purple martins flocking up prior to their fall migration. For a one- to two-week time period each fall, the purple martins would dramatically descend upon a stand of Bradford pear trees located near the Richmond 17th Street Farmers' Market. To support the festival, DWR provided interpretation, set up an exhibit table, and in one year provided a small sponsorship. The festival was popular and drew large crowds, but ended simply because the purple martins stopped appearing.

Elk-related Tourism

From 2012-2014, in partnership with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, DWR restored elk to a designated Elk Management Zone (EMZ) in Southwest Virginia, encompassing Buchanan, Dickenson, and Wise counties. In order to ensure the success of this restoration with a sustainable population of elk in the EMZ, DWR also developed a 10-year Elk Management Plan to benefit all Virginians, including those interested in elk viewing and elk tourism (DWR, 2019). To create a public elk viewing opportunity, DWR worked with multiple partners and volunteers to establish a public elk viewing area in Vansant, on Buchanan County property near the Southern Gap Outdoor Adventure Center. The area, which is a designated site on the VBWT, consists of three sheltered viewing stations with bench seating overlooking restored grassland habitat. Together, DWR, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and volunteers restored these lands degraded by a strip mine operation to a beneficial habitat for elk and other wildlife. In addition to the elk, these viewing stations also provide the opportunity to view grassland birds, wild turkey, white-tailed deer, butterflies, and the occasional black bear.



Elk have become a major tourism draw to the area ever since the restoration. Based on annual visitation to their visitor center, which provides access to the elk viewing area, Southern Gap Outdoor Adventure Center estimates that 8,000 - 10,000 people view elk at this area each year. In addition to this public viewing area, two local entities lead elk tours to the nearby elk restoration zone (the site where the elk were originally released). Breaks Interstate Park leads 20 paid elk tours, available to the public, each year with total annual attendance averaging at 300 people. Park staff also lead unpaid tours for potential partnering agencies and school groups that are attended by an additional 75-100 people annually. Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation leads tours for local groups and organizations and these are attended by another 1,100 people annually. Additionally, the first Southern Gap Elk Fest was held in the fall of 2020 with an estimated attendance of 2,700 over the four-day event, based on visitation to the Southern Gap Outdoor Adventures complex. The festival's elk tours were attended by 215 registered participants.

WILDLIFE AND HABITAT EDUCATION

DWR also connects people to wildlife through formal educational curriculum for students from preschool through 12th grade and through informal education, including the interpretation of wildlife and habitats. Interpretation is a communication process that translates scientific topics and terminology into those that are relevant and meaningful for its audience. By providing interpretive expertise, the Watchable Wildlife Program helps people to better understand and connect with Virginia's wildlife and habitats. This intellectual and emotional connection provides an introductory step that can lead people towards conservation action. To this end, Watchable Wildlife staff have helped to develop interpretive signage and print materials; write content for the DWR's varied digital media; and deliver public talks and training on birds and other wildlife, birding, wildlife viewing, and gardening for birds and other wildlife. Watchable Wildlife staff also provide internal technical assistance to DWR in the form of expertise on wildlife viewing, wildlife viewing constituents, and interpretive best practices.

Habitat Education

In order to increase public awareness of habitat issues and adoption of stewardship practices on private properties that conserve or restore habitats for wildlife, DWR implements the habitat education program. The program provides resources and educational workshops for corporate landowners, private landowners, schools, and homeowners to improve habitat in their community that will benefit Virginia's songbirds, mammals, amphibians and other wildlife. The DWR habitat education program delivers hands-on programs, presentations and events to teachers, homeowners, business leaders, decision-makers and others about how to conserve and restore wildlife habitat in order to inform their land-use and land-management practices. In addition, the program provides hands-on habitat education



programs, trainings and support-materials for teachers, volunteers, such as Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, youth leaders, environmental educators and others to implement native habitats in their areas. The DWR habitat education program works with a host of partners and sister agencies to develop materials specific to native plants, invasive species, and how-to instruction for creating and maintaining healthy native habitat in Virginia.

Wildlife Viewing Cameras

DWR offers live-streaming wildlife viewing cameras as a way to increase appreciation of wildlife and provide an educational experience.



Richmond Falcon Cam. The Watchable Wildlife Program coordinates the [Richmond Falcon Cam](#). The Richmond Falcon Cam has followed the same peregrine falcon nesting site in downtown Richmond for over a decade. This popular camera provides an intimate look at a nesting pair of peregrine falcons rearing their young that would not be obtainable otherwise. The camera's live stream is broadcast on a DWR webpage that also contains educational blog posts reporting on the falcons' nest status throughout the nesting season and an FAQ about the nest's history. The Falcon Cam was viewed by nearly 82,000 people in 2020. The majority of viewers are from Virginia and the mid-Atlantic U.S., but it also is followed by people throughout the U.S. and around the globe.



Elk Cam. The agency also offers an [elk cam](#). Located on a remote, private property in the town of Vansant, Virginia, this camera provides the public with live-streaming views of southwest Virginia's elk herd during their breeding season. The camera enables people living all over the Commonwealth, and beyond, to observe the splendor of Virginia's elk, and it is hoped to motivate tourism to the southwest part of the state (see "Elk-related Tourism" under Nature Tourism above). In 2019, the elk cam was viewed by nearly 163,000 people.

Shad Cam. Staff in DWR's Aquatics Division oversee the [Shad Cam](#), a webcam that allows viewers to watch the spring migration of shad and herring as they move through the fish ladder at Bosher's Dam at Richmond on their way up the James River.

Eagle Cam. Watchable Wildlife staff also formerly coordinated an Eagle Cam, located at Norfolk Botanical Garden, that provided views of a bald eagle nesting pair during the breeding season. The camera had over a million views annually. However, one of the eagles was killed in a collision with an airplane from the adjacent Norfolk International Airport in 2012. The nest was removed due to concerns about bird aircraft strike hazards and the camera was decommissioned.

Media Resources and Outreach

In recent years, the Watchable Wildlife Program has shifted much of its interpretive work away from signage and instead has been focusing more on increasing online content for a variety of digital media. A more recent effort by the Watchable Wildlife Program has been updating species profiles on Virginia's Species of Greatest Conservation Need. These webpages feature a mix of natural history, wildlife viewing, and conservation information, along with easy ways for the public to contribute. The Watchable Wildlife Program has also authored print and digital resources with how-to information on birding, and content for *Notes from the Field*, the DWR's electronic newsletter. The most significant Watchable Wildlife Program contributions to the DWR's digital media have been coordination of two DWR social media campaigns: Virginia is for Frogs and Year of the Bird. For DWR's 2015 Virginia is for Frogs campaign, the Watchable Wildlife Program worked with the agency Herpetologist to develop a webpage full of resources for the public and educators; coordinated a "Frog Friday" featured weekly on DWR's social media throughout the year; helped deliver special trainings for Virginia Master Naturalists and science educators; developed frog exhibit materials for use at events, including a special frog exhibit booth at the Virginia Living Museum; and developed promotional give-away items. This campaign, in particular the Frog Friday component, struck a chord with the public and garnered media attention. The DWR's Outreach Media Team reported that Meltwater, a digital monitoring service, valued the news coverage spawned by Frog Friday at \$20,000. In 2018, the Watchable Wildlife Program worked together with the agency's Nongame Bird Conservation Biologist to support the international Year of the Bird, a centennial celebration of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, with monthly DWR blog articles to support the campaign's monthly themes. DWR's *Virginia Wildlife Magazine* also featured an expanded bird section of their photo contest issue with a focus on migratory birds.



Pre-K Through 12 Education

Project WILD. Project WILD is a Pre-K 12 education program provided to Virginia teachers through in-service workshops. Teachers receive one of six Project WILD curriculum guides through DWR sponsored workshops. The guides contain interdisciplinary lessons that support state standards and wildlife management and natural resource concepts. Lessons get students outside as young scientists to explore the natural world through investigations and creative activities. Students have the opportunity to participate in wildlife based citizen science projects through teacher led field investigations on the school grounds. Each year DWR sponsors between 50 and 60 three to eight hour teacher in-service workshops reaching 600 – 800 teachers from pre K through grade 12. There is no cost to the school system or to the educators to attend the workshops or for the Project WILD guide and supplementary

materials provided. Additionally, the Project WILD Coordinator from DWR sits on the Virginia Department of Education committee for Standards of Learning (SOLs). Through their involvement, SOLs include wildlife conservation topics.

Virginia Wildlife Grant Program. Launched in 2014 in partnership with the Wildlife Foundation of Virginia, DWR has offered this grant program to connect youth to the outdoors. It provides a funding source to non-profits, schools, and government agencies in need of support for projects that will recruit and retain youth participation in outdoor recreational activities relevant to the DWR's mission, including wildlife viewing. Wildlife viewing has been one of the grant program's major areas of connection and support, and projects that benefit underrepresented groups are prioritized. Viewing was the program's most funded activity in 2017-2019, supporting 10 projects at nearly \$20,000 in 2017, 10 projects at nearly \$24,000 in 2018, and 6 projects at over \$14,000 in 2019. Support of the Grant Program is generated through the sale of gear and other merchandise from Go Outdoors Virginia, private donations, and fundraising events.



Trout in the Classroom. Trout in the Classroom is an educational program in which elementary, middle, and high school students raise trout from eggs to fingerlings and then directly release the fish in a stream or river. The program is administered across the country through partnerships between schools, state wildlife agencies, and a variety of nongovernmental organizations. In Virginia, the Trout in the Classroom (TIC) program has been operating since 2005, with trout eggs supplied by DWR fish hatcheries and classroom presentations, field trips, and other technical assistance coordinated by partner organizations, especially Trout Unlimited. In some cases, Trout Unlimited chapters provide some of the equipment such as temperature-controlled tanks, necessary for the program; in others, schools write grants or obtain funding from other sources. When the trout are ready for release, local Trout Unlimited chapters work with DWR biologists to release the trout into agency-approved waters. The program increases student knowledge of water quality and conservation, with an underlying goal of connecting increasingly urban students with their local environments and wildlife resources in the Commonwealth. During the 2014-2015 school year, over 230 schools with 242 TIC tanks participated in the program (Trout Unlimited Virginia Council, 2020).

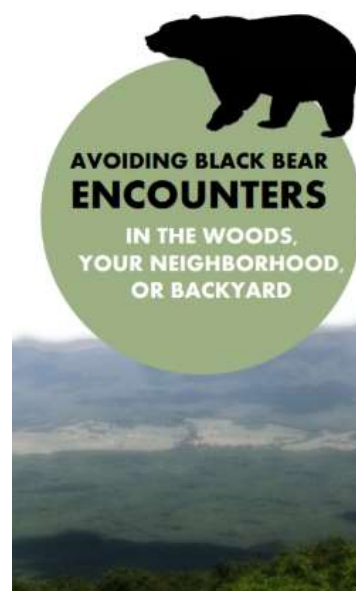
Protect people and property by promoting safe outdoor experiences and managing human-wildlife conflicts



EDUCATION AND OUTREACH RELATED TO HUMAN-WILDLIFE INTERACTION

DWR's District Biologists and Watchable Wildlife staff provide information about human and wildlife interactions through a variety of methods including the development of promotional materials and direct technical assistance. For example, DWR has developed a series of campaigns to discourage feeding or getting too close to wildlife, due to the risks associated with the habituation of animals to humans. The most significant campaign is "Bear Aware" which provides guidance for avoiding conflict with bears around the home, while camping, and while in nature. With other state agencies, DWR also supports [Bear Wise](#), a regional program developed by black bear biologists to provide information about how to keep bears wild and prevent problems between bears and neighborhoods and communities. Other publications focus on interacting with elk, leaving fawns alone, and managing backyard bird feeders. While the risk of disease is very small, the agency also provides guidance on risks emerging from potential contact with wildlife disease (e.g. Lyme disease, bear mange) and outreach on actions to avoid exposure. In the event that conflict with wildlife does occur, the Agency contracts with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to host a Wildlife Conflict Helpline; this helpline fields thousands of calls annually and provides technical assistance to callers.

In addition to general information on human-wildlife interactions, DWR develops targeted informational materials and classes about safety and best management practices for viewing and other outdoor related activities. DWR provides classes for more than 30,000 boaters, 10,000 hunters, and hundreds of anglers and wildlife viewers each year to ensure the safety of wildlife recreationists. DWR also distributes information about recreational seasons, hunting and boating safety, and access restrictions through a variety of media including email, social media, advertisements, and the distribution of more than 250,000 print guides. Although conflicts between hunters and wildlife viewers are extremely rare, DWR works to promote coexistence between these recreation groups and to promote safety in areas where both activities occur, particularly on WMAs. All hunting season and WMA rules and access recommendations are listed on the agency's website and at each WMA kiosk. The Watchable Wildlife Program also includes information about hunting seasons on the VBWT website, since some Trail sites are also used for hunting.



CONSERVATION POLICE OFFICERS

DWR employs over 150 Conservation Police Officers that are responsible for enforcing wildlife, boat and fish regulations and all other criminal and regulatory laws in the Commonwealth and play a significant role in ensuring the safety of people, property and wildlife. Conservation Police Officers respond to nearly 59,000 calls for service each year that range from public safety to trespassing and wildlife crimes. In many instances, DWR's Conservation Police are the first and only contact people have with the Agency and thus play a significant role in education and outreach, and in connecting the public to DWR. In fact, part of the Conservation Police mission is to "provide education and outreach in an effort to gain voluntary compliance with and promote public understanding and support of the Commonwealth's wildlife, fish, and boating regulations." Conservation Police provide education and outreach in a variety of ways including planning and organizing community outreach programs; teaching hunting, firearm, and boating safety; and participating in Agency outreach events.



HOW WILDLIFE VIEWERS SUPPORT THE DWR

Wildlife viewers and other wildlife enthusiasts are critical to the success of the DWR. Each year, wildlife viewers directly contribute volunteer time, observational data, and financial resources to support the agency's work to conserve wildlife and habitats and connect people to nature.

CITIZEN SCIENCE

Opportunities for citizen science – scientific research conducted by volunteer scientists, rather than or in collaboration with professional scientists – provide an important connection between DWR and wildlife viewers. Most of the agency's citizen science effort has been in the form of sponsorships to other groups that host citizen science programs, such as the Virginia Master Naturalist Program and the Virginia Bluebird Society. Over the years, several citizen science projects have originated from the efforts or proposals of agency personnel. Once initiated by the agency, many of these projects have eventually been outsourced to other groups, largely due to a lack of staff capacity. For example, the agency initiated a Frog and Toad Call Survey, which is now coordinated by the Virginia Living Museum as part of Frog Watch. The Watchable Wildlife Program also promotes regional and national citizen science opportunities that occur annually, such as the Christmas Bird Count and Great Backyard Bird Count.

Adopt-a-Trail

To maintain up-to-date information on the VBWT's 600 sites, the DWR's Watchable Wildlife Program coordinates an Adopt-a-Trail Project, in which volunteer groups adopt local loop(s) of the Trail. Volunteers visit the sites 1-4 times a year to verify existing VBWT information on each site, evaluate site conditions, communicate with site owners or managers, and report on VBWT signage conditions. Volunteers also record their observations of birds and wildlife into the Wildlife Mapping project on iNaturalist and eBird. The project was initiated in 2016 as a project within the Virginia Master Naturalist

framework, but now welcomes participation from other groups. As an example, a professor at University of Virginia - Wise incorporated the project into a Vertebrate Zoology course in 2019 and continues to use the program within current curriculum. Thus far, 50% of VBWT loops have been adopted and the Watchable Wildlife Program is actively recruiting additional volunteer groups in an effort to achieve a 100% loop adoption rate.

Virginia Master Naturalist (VMN) Program

The VMN program is a statewide corps of volunteers providing education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities. With 29 chapters across Virginia, the program aims to extend the capacities of both state and local natural resource agencies and organizations to be able achieve their missions in new ways, engage new audiences, and work towards creating a citizenry more informed about and involved in natural resource conservation and management. The program, because of its chapter-based structure, also promotes learning about, exploring, and stewarding natural areas through social groups.



Local VMN chapters recruit and train volunteers through a 40+ hour course that includes both classroom and field instruction on a wide array of natural resource topics, including many wildlife and habitat-related topics. In a typical year, 400 new volunteers graduate from the VMN basic training course and 2,200 or more VMN volunteers report service in four primary areas: education, stewardship, citizen science, and chapter administration. In 2019, VMN volunteers contributed more than 45,000 hours of stewardship to improve local natural resource conditions on more than 580 sites through invasive plant management in parks, creation and maintenance of habitats for pollinators and other wildlife, trail maintenance of hundreds of miles of trails, and litter cleanup events. Volunteers also contributed more than 63,000 hours of time to more than 50 citizen science studies of birds, phenology, mammals, butterflies, stream health, and more. In addition, volunteers made more than 170,000 contacts through educational programs in their communities that totaled 47,000 hours of service. These programs included day camps and afterschool programs for youth, talks for local community groups, and activities at numerous special events, such as local Earth Day celebrations. Since the program's inception in 2005, VMN volunteers have contributed more than one million hours of service with a value of more than \$23.8 million to the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The VMN program is based at Virginia Tech and Virginia Cooperative Extension, but it is co-sponsored by six other state agencies, including DWR. As a founding sponsor of the VMN program, DWR provides state-level funding that supports program staff, volunteer recognition items, educational events, and general program infrastructure. DWR staff serve as advisors for approximately 25% of VMN chapters and as instructors for numerous basic training courses and continuing education programs. DWR staff also serve as contacts or coordinators for projects that involve VMN volunteers, including statewide projects such as the Adopt-a-Trail project for the Virginia Bird and Wildlife Trail and local projects, and stewardship work at some Wildlife Management Areas. The VMN program provides DWR and its other sponsoring agencies with a platform to communicate with a constituency of wildlife watchers who may not be otherwise connected with the agency. DWR regularly provides content for the VMN newsletter and social media, online and in-person continuing education events, and information about volunteer opportunities.

Some key collaborative projects between the VMN program and DWR include:

- *The Virginia Bird and Wildlife Trail Adopt-a-Trail project.* VMN chapters adopt sites on the Virginia Bird and Wildlife Trail at which they document and report observations of wildlife and monitor for trail conditions and access issues. Thus far, VMN chapters have adopted 50% of the VBWT loops. They have been instrumental in helping DWR update their VBWT database, recommending the removal of sites due to access or quality issues and the nomination of new VBWT sites, such as Windsor Castle Park in Smithfield. They have also provided insight and feedback to DWR on how to improve the VBWT program as a whole based on their communications with individual VBWT site owners and managers.
- *Demonstration habitat projects.* VMN chapters have collaborated with DWR personnel to create new habitat gardens using native plants on publicly accessible sites such as Pleasant Grove in Fluvanna County, Yowell Meadow Park in Culpeper, and schoolyards in York and Poquoson.
- *Projects at Wildlife Management Areas.* VMN chapters have assisted with stewardship, education, and citizen science at DWR's Wildlife Management Areas. For example, at Merrimac Farm Wildlife Management Area in Prince William County, VMN volunteers have planted and maintained a wildlife habitat garden, re-blazed trails to improve public access, provided general cleanup assistance, and co-led educational events for the public.
- *Fisheries projects.* VMN collaborations with DWR are not limited to land. VMN volunteers have assisted DWR personnel with fish stocking, fish surveys, freshwater mussel counts, and aquatic habitat improvements at sites like Claytor Lake State Park.
- *Vernal Pool Cooperative of Virginia.* VMN volunteers are trained by Virginia Commonwealth University, DWR, and veteran VMN volunteers to seek out and monitor vernal pools on public properties. Once trained, VMN volunteers establish contact with the natural resource manager of a property for guidance and needed permissions as well as collect data on species-use within that property's vernal pools. From 2014 to present, volunteers have collected over 34,000 data measurements which are accessible to project managers including DWR staff and partners at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Breeding Bird Atlases

The largest citizen science projects undertaken by the agency (and the largest in the Commonwealth) to date have been the two Virginia Breeding Bird Atlases (VABBA and VABBA2). The first Atlas was conducted from 1985-1989, and the second from 2016-2020. These Atlas projects document the geographic distribution and breeding and population status of Virginia's diverse breeding bird communities, and are vital for not only providing information critical for conservation planning and action, but also for their extensive engagement with volunteers and partner organizations. The VABBA2 project recruited 1,500 volunteer citizen scientists who contributed data to the project's eBird portal. Additionally, the project engaged with over 58 NGOs, 8 universities, and many county, state, and federal agencies to build a network of avian conservation partners. During the data-collection phase of this effort, over 80 programs and workshops were held around the state, reaching thousands of wildlife viewers, including birders, Master Naturalists, students, and more. When the project completed its final field season in 2020, the VABBA2 database included over 600,000 breeding records and over 5 million birds reported by volunteers, and over 70,000 hours of volunteer effort logged to the project. Starting in 2021, VABBA2 data will be reviewed, analyzed, and compared to the first VABBA to shed light on changes in Virginia's avian communities over the past thirty years, with the ultimate goal of helping to inform future avian management and conservation strategies. However, the community of volunteers cultivated throughout this project represent an additional key resource developed through this effort.

Many of these volunteers stand ready and eager to engage with DWR on future wildlife and habitat monitoring efforts.

Wildlife Mapping

The other long-running citizen science project organized by the agency has been Wildlife Mapping, a project of the Watchable Wildlife Program. Wildlife Mapping started in 1997 to document the distribution of Virginia's wildlife in order to augment the work of DWR's biologists and partners. In 2015, the project was updated to utilize the iNaturalist platform for data entry, making the project open to public participation and modernizing the data entry process. DWR's highest priority with the project is to collect data on Virginia's Species of Greatest Conservation Need, as listed in Virginia's Wildlife Action Plan. Once verified by DWR staff, observations gathered from this project are added to the Virginia Species Observations database, which is maintained by DWR and used to assist environmental review and conservation planning efforts. Participation in this project has been high over the years, particularly by the Virginia Master Naturalists. By October of 2020, 522 people had reported 41,892 observations of wildlife to DWR's Wildlife Mapping Project in iNaturalist.



Additional Citizen Science Surveys

A few of the DWR's longest-running and most active citizen science projects date back to the 1970's and 80's and include the Virginia Bowhunter Survey, Rural Mail Carrier Route survey, Quail Cooperator survey, Spring Turkey Survey, and the Deer Management Assistance Program. The Mail Carrier Route survey is the DWR's longest running survey and uses mail delivery service personnel in rural parts of the state to report wildlife species they observe while driving. Other efforts use hunters to collect and record data, either their observations or their harvested animals. DWR uses information from these surveys, specifically long-term trends from these data, to help set seasons, bag limits, and other regulations for wildlife species that are commonly hunted or trapped.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Because the DWR receives no funding from general state tax dollars, agency revenue depends primarily on the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, boat registration fees, a portion of the sales tax on wildlife viewing and outdoor recreation equipment, and federal excise taxes on certain hunting and fishing equipment. The DWR approaches recreationists as having dynamic and overlapping identities, and it is clear from previous research (Cooper et al., 2015) that wildlife recreationists participate in multiple kinds of recreation; for example, some hunters also view birds and other wildlife, and some wildlife viewers also participate in boating and recreational shooting. Thus, wildlife viewers undoubtedly purchase some number of licenses, permits, and registrations each year through the DWR. Additionally, wildlife viewers contribute to conservation through voluntarily purchases of state and federal duck stamps; the money generated from these stamps is dedicated to wetland habitat restoration. Additional funding streams to which wildlife viewers and other constituents contribute include:

Sales Tax

Wildlife enthusiasts fund the DWR through a portion (2%) of the state sales tax applied to outdoor-related goods and equipment, as stipulated by House Bill 38, which was passed by the Virginia General Assembly in 1998 and implemented in 2000. House Bill 38 allows for the transfer of up to \$13 million annually to the Department from these taxes. The amount distributed each year is tied directly to the figures provided in the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, conducted every five years by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Census Bureau. The maximum amount that can be received by DWR is calculated by adding the "Equipment" and "Auxiliary Equipment" expenditures in Virginia for hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching and multiplying that total by 0.02. These expenditure categories include optics, hunting and fishing supplies, wildlife viewing supplies, and some hiking and camping equipment.

Nongame Fund

Wildlife viewers can also donate directly to the DWR's threatened and endangered species programs by tax checkoff or direct donations to the nongame fund. Donations to the nongame fund fluctuates widely but averages about \$150,000 annually. All monies contributed are used to conserve and manage endangered species and other nongame wildlife or to support opportunities for viewing these species. "Nongame wildlife" includes protected wildlife, endangered and threatened wildlife, aquatic wildlife, specialized habitat wildlife both terrestrial and aquatic, and mollusks, crustaceans, and other invertebrates under the jurisdiction of the Board of Wildlife Resources.

License Plates

In addition, wildlife enthusiasts can purchase a "wildlife conservationist" license plate, for which proceeds are returned to the DWR's general fund, which supports the agency's work across all divisions, programs, and projects. Nine different license plates highlight a variety of species, including the largemouth bass, black bear, bluebird, brook trout, bald eagle, mallard, turkey, and whitetail deer. The newest conservationist license plate was released in October 2020 and features the state salamander, the red salamander. The sale of the conservationist license plate generates an average of \$375,000 annually.



Restore the Wild

Launched in April 2019, Restore the Wild is a membership initiative that provides an opportunity for wildlife viewers to contribute to the DWR and join in the agency's mission to conserve Virginia's wildlife. All proceeds from the membership initiative are dedicated to habitat restoration efforts which benefit native flora and fauna. Members at all levels receive an access permit that carries the same benefits and status as a hunting or fishing license relative to entry onto DWR properties. Restore the Wild continues to evolve as a program to include a more general call for support since the inception of the initiative in 2019, allowing individuals to donate their time, money or expertise to "restoring the wild." As of April 2021, Restore the Wild had raised over \$46,000 and funded six habitat projects covering more than 180 acres. These projects have benefitted two federally endangered species, rusty-patched bumble bee and red-cockaded woodpecker, plus numerous other species. The DWR continues to look for ways to use the

framework of Restore the Wild to connect people to the DWR and conservation through events and other opportunities, such as an inaugural “Run for the Wild” virtual event and citizen science projects.




SWOT ANALYSIS

The SAC and TAC for this plan performed a SWOT analysis, a tool used often in strategic planning to consider the internal strengths (S) and weaknesses (W) and external opportunities (O) and threats (T) that will define the success of a project or organization. For this plan, **strengths** include the unique resources or capabilities the DWR has that could be used to support wildlife viewing, while **weaknesses** refer to internal structures or policies and staffing or budgeting constraints that might limit the capacity of the agency to support wildlife viewing. **Opportunities** draw attention to gaps for supporting wildlife viewing that the DWR might fill and any conditions that are changing nationally or in the state that may expand the role or relevancy of the DWR for wildlife viewing. **Threats**, on the other hand, include potential national or state-level changes, including in legislation or funding, that may restrict the capacity or relevancy of the DWR for wildlife viewing. Conducting a SWOT analysis for the Wildlife Viewing Plan allowed the SAC and TAC to think strategically about the broader context for this Wildlife Viewing Plan and develop a plan that is likely to be successful given the agency's internal and external realities. This analysis also highlighted new possibilities for the DWR to support wildlife viewing in creative and innovative ways. The following table summarizes each component of the SWOT analysis.

STRENGTHS (internal to DWR)	WEAKNESSES (internal to DWR)
Knowledgeable and passionate DWR personnel across divisions, including the Watchable Wildlife Program	Limited staff with a focus on wildlife viewing and addition of personnel takes a long time
Funding sources that can connect wildlife viewers to the agency	Difficult for the public to identify and contact DWR biologists
Programming for wildlife viewing, including festivals and web cameras	Limited intra-agency coordination and organizing structure for wildlife viewing programs and services
Public lands and waters	Limited agency funding currently generated from viewers presents challenges for sustainably prioritizing and supporting wildlife viewing
Digital and print outreach materials, including the DWR website, magazine, and newsletter	Wildlife viewing on WMAs constrained by safety concerns related to simultaneous use of WMAs for hunting and viewing, general lack of information about the purpose of WMAs and their location, and limitations on infrastructure and recreation activities on WMAs
Partnerships and relationships with conservation organizations, other agencies, volunteers, and license purchasers	Limited staff capacity to expand and fully support opportunities to engage in citizen science
Agency mission, vision, and strategic planning formally reflect the importance of connecting people to wildlife and wildlife viewing	Residual prioritization of hunting and angling due to agency history and funding streams
Increasing attention to wildlife viewing within the agency	Limited communication about how the agency uses data contributed by citizen scientists
Data on wildlife observations submitted by citizen scientists and agency volunteers	

OPPORTUNITIES (external to DWR)	THREATS (external to DWR)
<p>Abundant and unique wildlife and viewing opportunities around the state</p> <p>Growing interest in wildlife, wildlife viewing, native plants, backyard habitat, wildlife photography</p> <p>Growing awareness of human impacts on nature</p> <p>Potential to expand access to viewing locations, including on private lands</p> <p>Potential for new and existing federal and agency-level funding streams to expand support for wildlife viewing</p> <p>Potential to provide additional support for viewing among a variety of groups, including youth and young adults, people of color, urban populations, and beginning viewers</p> <p>Potential to connect more people to citizen science opportunities and to communicate the value and use of collected data</p> <p>Potential to use online platforms to promote wildlife and wildlife viewing</p> <p>Potential to form partnerships for enduring, large-scale impact with local, regional, and national nature-based organizations, county and local governments, and state parks</p> <p>Opportunities to engage volunteers through DWR Wildlife Ambassadors, VA Master Naturalists, and citizen science, especially the VABBA2 network</p>	<p>Human pressure on wildlife and habitats, including human population growth, urbanization, privatization, habitat loss, and degradation</p> <p>Broad social trends including increasing limitations in free time, reliance on technology, and fear of wildlife and/or the outdoors</p> <p>Recreational pressure on and potential loss of existing access points for wildlife viewing</p> <p>Potential funding limitations emerging from reliance on sales tax transferred to the agency from state and federal government</p> <p>Limited public awareness of how state wildlife conservation is funded</p> <p>Increase in technology-assisted wildlife viewing through social media, apps, and wildlife cameras may reduce direct outdoor experiences</p> <p>Distrust and differences in interests and values between constituency groups, including different recreation types and recreationists in different geographic regions</p> <p>Funding sources for nongame species are focused on conserving endangered species or species of greatest conservation need, rather than connecting people to wildlife and the outdoors</p>



Part IV

Wildlife Recreation Study

The *Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap* points to the need for agencies to conduct and apply social science to identify, understand, and plan for engagement with groups outside of the hunting and angling communities they have traditionally served (AFWA & WMI 2019). Consistent with the recommendations of the Relevancy Roadmap, the DWR contracted with researchers at Virginia Tech to conduct human dimensions research on the behaviors and interests of the growing number and diversity of wildlife recreationists throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. This mixed-methods study included focus groups (Grooms et al., 2019) and a survey conducted with birders, other wildlife viewers, hunters, and anglers (Grooms et al., 2020), as well as a web-based stakeholder analysis (Tsang et al., 2021). An overview of each phase of this study and key findings are described below.

WILDLIFE RECREATION STUDY



Focus
groups



Mail and online
surveys



Web-based
stakeholder analysis

WILDLIFE RECREATION FOCUS GROUPS

Adapted from *Wildlife Recreationists in Virginia: Focus Group Results* (Grooms et al., 2019)

Methods

A series of eight focus groups were conducted across the Commonwealth between March and July 2018 with four wildlife recreation groups: *birders*, *general wildlife viewers*, *hunters*, and *anglers* (Grooms et al. 2019). Two 90-minute focus groups were held with each of the four recreation groups, and each focus group included up to 15 participants. A total of 83 recreationists participated in the focus groups, including 53 men and 31 women. Participants represented 36 counties in Virginia and were predominantly avid recreationists, many having 26+ years of involvement within their recreation group. Semi-structured focus group conversations explored recreationists' conservation behaviors; awareness of and trust in DWR; satisfaction with DWR programs; perceptions of relative treatment of various wildlife recreation groups; and willingness to support DWR and expectations for doing so. Recordings of each event were transcribed and coded to identify themes of responses and allow for comparisons among the four recreation groups.

Key Findings

Conservation behaviors. Recreationists participated in multiple conservation behaviors, and most commonly discussed educating others about wildlife viewing and conservation and enhancing habitat for wildlife. Their motivations for contributing to conservation were mostly related to their desire to interact with others (i.e., affiliative motives), to decompress and have fun (i.e., appreciative motives), and to prevent species decline and habitat loss (i.e., protecting wildlife motives). Primary constraints to conservation behaviors differed among recreation groups. Birders and wildlife viewers noted structural constraints, such as lack of time, money, and poor personal health as impeding their conservation behaviors.

Awareness of and experiences with DWR. Focus groups participants also discussed their perception of DWR's role and their familiarity and satisfaction with the agency's programs and services. All groups of recreationists considered DWR to have roles in: 1) serving the needs of hunters and anglers, 2) conserving and managing wildlife and habitat, and 3) connecting people to wildlife and conservation. Recreationists were familiar with a variety of DWR *programs* and *services*, which were grouped into the following categories: 1) wildlife and habitat research and management, 2) hunter and angler programs, 3) wildlife viewing programs, 4) outreach and conservation education, 5) citizen science and volunteer opportunities, 6) recreation access, and 7) laws and regulations. Birders and wildlife viewers were more familiar with programs related to wildlife viewing and outreach and conservation education (e.g., festivals and organizations sponsored by the agency). Birders and wildlife viewers also mentioned their experiences using WMAs and the VBWT. Additionally, all four recreation groups had experience with services and programs related to citizen science and volunteer opportunities, such as the Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas. All four recreation groups were generally satisfied with their experiences with DWR programs and services. Specifically, birders and wildlife viewers discussed their satisfaction with DWR conservation courses and environmental education efforts. All four wildlife recreation groups also spoke about their overall satisfaction with the agency and DWR employees. Dissatisfaction in DWR programs and services was less common, especially among birders and viewers; however, these groups did express some frustration with what they perceived to be limited management of habitat for nongame wildlife by the agency.

Trust and perceived equity. Birders and wildlife viewers were generally less trusting of the DWR than hunters and anglers and focused discussion on the factors that would improve their trust. Trust in the agency among birders and wildlife viewers was often rooted in positive, personal interactions with DWR employees and positive perceptions of past demonstrated effectiveness by the agency. Birders described their trust in the agency improving when agency employees engaged with their local bird clubs, maintained sustained relationships with them, and were perceived as having similar values. All four recreation groups also noted their trust would improve if the agency had access to more resources (e.g., funding and staff) to serve their recreational needs. Birder and wildlife viewer *distrust* in the DWR tended to be based on perceptions of the agency not meeting their needs and on perceived unfairness in agency policies and processes. Birders and wildlife viewers discussed feeling that hunters and anglers were better served by the agency and attributed this to not having a mechanism similar to hunter and angler funding (e.g., Pittman-Robertson excise tax, license sales) by which they could contribute funds to the agency.

Supporting DWR. All four wildlife recreation groups were generally *willing to support* DWR and noted four main methods to do so: 1) donating or providing funds, 2) involving others in DWR activities, 3) participating in DWR programs, and 4) volunteering. Involving others in DWR activities was the most common mode of support discussed by all recreationist groups. Monetary donations and contributions were a less prominent mode of support, but included the purchase of hunting and fishing licenses, funds provided through the Pittman-Robertson Act, Virginia’s House Bill 38, and contributions to the nongame fund. Compared to hunters and anglers, birders and wildlife viewers more often discussed supporting the agency through volunteer work. Many recreationists also discussed expectations coupled with their support. Birders and wildlife viewers wanted their support to benefit their recreation activities and to provide tangible results and feedback.

WILDLIFE RECREATION SURVEY

Adapted from *Supporting Wildlife Recreationists in Virginia: Survey report to inform the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources’ Wildlife Viewing Plan* (Grooms et al., 2020)

Methods

In order to collect generalizable information about wildlife recreationists in Virginia, Virginia Tech researchers conducted a survey with two different samples: a random sample of Virginia residents (hereafter, “Public”) and a second sample of recreationists currently connected to DWR through hunting and fishing license sales, the agency’s *Notes from the Field* e-newsletter, or the Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas (hereafter, “DWR-affiliated”) (Grooms et al. 2020). The survey was administered online and, for the public sample only, also by mail, between October 2019 and January 2020, followed by a non-response survey conducted between December 2019 and May 2020. The survey questionnaire was developed based on insights from the focus groups described above (Grooms et al. 2019), feedback from the Stakeholder and Technical Advisory Committees of this Wildlife Viewing Plan, and past research on the survey topics. The survey explored respondents’ wildlife recreation identities (i.e., hunter, angler, birder, and wildlife viewer); participation in wildlife recreation and conservation; experiences with and perceptions of DWR; and interest in future engagement with DWR through conservation, funding streams, and communications.

Key Findings

A total of 3626 surveys were returned; this includes 2610 responses from the DWR-affiliated sample (response rate = 20.4%) and 1016 responses from the Public sample (response rate = 7.7%). For both samples, the majority of respondents were male, above the age of 60, White, and non-Hispanic/Latino. Most respondents also had a Bachelor's degree or higher, a total annual income of at least \$75,000 per year, and lived in rural areas. The majority of respondents in both the Public and DWR-affiliated samples identified as wildlife viewers and birders. Because birding is a form of wildlife viewing, we grouped wildlife viewers and birders together as "all viewers," which represented a total of 77.2% of respondents in the DWR-affiliated sample (n = 2015) and 68.2% of respondents in the Public sample (n = 693). In both samples, the majority of hunters and anglers also identified as birders and/or wildlife viewers.

Virginia's wildlife viewers. Compared to their representation in Virginia's population, people who are non-White, Hispanic/Latino, or female; those who have less formal education than a Bachelor's degree; people residing in urban or suburban areas; people under the age of 54; and those who earn less than \$50,000 a year were underrepresented among viewers in our study. The majority of self-identified birders and wildlife viewers in our Public sample had more than 10 years of experience with birding or wildlife viewing, respectively. For both birding and wildlife viewing, years of experience was related to strength of identity as a birder or wildlife viewer; the mean number of days participated in birding and wildlife viewing over the last year; and the percent of days travelled away from home for viewing.

Wildlife viewing locations. The survey explored how birders and other wildlife viewers currently use public and private lands and how DWR might enhance access to viewing in these locations. Fewer wildlife viewers and birders reported using Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and Virginia Bird and Wildlife Trail (VBWT) sites, compared to other public lands, including other state-managed areas (e.g., state parks, state forests, boat landings, and Natural Area Preserves). Comparing use of WMAs and VBWT sites, more wildlife viewers and birders in both samples reported visiting WMAs for their activities than VBWT sites. However, because all national wildlife refuges, most state parks, many sites in Shenandoah National Park and George Washington Jefferson National Forest, and WMAs and local parks throughout the state are designated as VBWT sites, it is possible that low reported rates of VBWT use actually reflect lack of awareness about the Trail. In fact, among all viewers (including birders and wildlife viewers) who had not used WMAs and VBWT sites in the past five years, the most common perceived constraint was a lack of awareness of where to access these lands. Almost half of all viewers thought DWR could better support their viewing activities by providing more information about accessing VBWT sites and WMAs and where to go to see birds and other wildlife, and between 30 and 40% of all viewers indicated that DWR could support them by providing more access to locations for seeing birds and other wildlife. The vast majority of all viewers had participated in birding and wildlife viewing around their home.

Types of wildlife viewers. Consistent with DWR's approach to wildlife recreationists as dynamic and overlapping, survey responses allowed the identification of four "recreation types" that account for the multiple and intersecting recreation identities of wildlife viewers. These types included Birder-viewers (Public n = 352, DWR-affiliated n = 534), Viewer-hunter-anglers (Public n = 270, DWR-affiliated n = 1076), and Birder-viewer-hunter-anglers (Public n = 81, DWR-affiliated n = 436). The analysis also identified Hunter-anglers (Public n = 104, DWR-affiliated n = 300) among survey respondents. Individuals in the four recreation types differed in expected ways in terms of the average amount of time they spent birding, wildlife viewing, hunting, and fishing over the past year and over their lifetimes. Across recreation types, Birder-viewer-hunter-anglers spent the greatest amount of time in the past year birding and wildlife viewing; Viewer-hunter-anglers spent more time hunting and fishing than other

recreation types. These patterns suggest that, on average, wildlife recreationists who participate in multiple recreation activities spend more time engaged in each form of wildlife recreation. The four recreation types were also characterized by a few notable differences in socio-demographics. The vast majority of Hunter-anglers, Viewer-hunter-anglers, and Birder-Viewer-hunter-anglers were male, while the majority of Birder-viewers were female. Birder-viewers also had the most formal education among the recreation types.

Wildlife viewers and conservation. We measured five broad categories of conservation behavior among wildlife recreationists, including: 1) informing or teaching others about wildlife conservation; 2) improving habitat on public or private lands; 3) advocating or voting related to wildlife conservation; 4) collecting data on wildlife or habitat to contribute to science or management; and 5) contributing to fundraising efforts for wildlife conservation. Recreation types that included a birder identity component (i.e., Birder-viewers and Birder-viewer-hunter-anglers) had higher levels of participation in all five conservation behaviors measured in our survey, compared to recreation types that lacked a birder identity component. ‘Benefiting wildlife’ was the top motivator for all five conservation behaviors, followed closely by ‘accomplishing something important’ and, for some behaviors, ‘doing something enjoyable’. In contrast, recreationists who did not participate in conservation behaviors most often indicated that not having enough time was an ‘extremely’ or ‘very important’ barrier to their participation.

Perceptions of and trust in DWR. As expected, wildlife recreationists in the DWR-affiliated sample were more familiar with the agency than recreationists in the Public sample. On average, respondents from all four recreation types thought that DWR currently gives higher priority to hunters and anglers than birders and other wildlife viewers. Across the recreation types, Birder-viewer-hunter-anglers had the highest mean levels of trust in the agency, while Birder-viewers had the lowest mean levels of trust. Among the recreation types, Birder-viewers had the highest rates of participation within the past five years with the VBWT, volunteer research and wildlife data collection, and wildlife organizations sponsored by DWR. With the exception of law enforcement, Birder-viewer-hunter-anglers had the highest rates of participation in all other DWR programs and services listed in the survey. All recreation types generally expressed high levels of satisfaction in all DWR programs they had used.

DWR support for wildlife viewers. All DWR-affiliated viewers preferred electronic modes of communication commonly used by DWR, especially email updates, e-newsletters, and the DWR website, while all Public viewers preferred communication via printed materials. In response to a question about what DWR could do to better support their recreation activities in Virginia, a majority of Birder-viewers desired access to more places to go birding and wildlife viewing, as well as more information about accessing WMAs and sites along the VBWT, compared to the other recreation types. Satisfaction with existing DWR programs and services was high among those who had engaged with them, with the majority of respondents reporting that they were ‘somewhat’ or ‘extremely satisfied’ with the experience.

Wildlife viewer support for DWR. The majority of Birder-viewers and Birder-viewer-hunter-anglers reported they were likely to support DWR within the next 12 months through conservation activities including habitat management, collecting data, advocacy, fundraising, or teaching others. Birder-viewers were least likely among recreation types to have purchased any Virginia hunting, angling, or sportsman licenses within the past year. Although few survey respondents had purchased a DWR Restore the Wild Membership (0.6 - 2.4%), there was high interest among recreation types with a birder identity in purchasing this membership in the future.

WEB-BASED STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

For additional details, see Tsang et al. (2021)

Methods

The focus groups and surveys conducted in this study explored the interests and experiences of individual wildlife viewers. Those data were supplemented with a web-based stakeholder analysis focused on the activities of wildlife viewing organizations, including federal, state, and local agencies, non-governmental organizations, and businesses (hereafter, collectively referred to as organizations). Between May and August 2019, researchers at Virginia Tech analyzed the websites of 214 organizations in Virginia that conduct or promote wildlife viewing activities in the state. Identification of wildlife viewing organizations began with brainstorming by the SAC and TAC, followed by a systematic Google search (Tsang et al., *in review*). Guided by the goals of the Wildlife Viewing Plan, information on the characteristics of wildlife viewing organizations; how these stakeholders engage with wildlife; and their involvement in conservation activities was collected from organization websites.

Key Findings

Of the organizations analyzed, 20 were the affiliations of SAC members; 35 were identified through brainstorming by members of the SAC and TAC; and 159 additional organizations were identified through a systematic Google search. These organizations included 35 county and independent city government bodies (16% of organizations), 17 federal government agencies (8%), 15 state government agencies (7%), 36 businesses (17%) and 111 NGOs (52%), which included clubs, nature centers, museums, foundations, and conservancies. There was a strong geographic trend in the distribution of wildlife viewing organizations in the state, with over twice as many organizations headquartered or active in the coastal and northeastern metropolitan areas of Virginia (DWR Regions 1 and 4) than in the inland and more rural central and southwestern regions (DWR Regions 2 and 3).

Recreation activities. The majority of organizations analyzed indicated an interest in all wildlife in general on their websites, and a third showed a specific interest in viewing birds. Few organizations specifically mentioned a focus on or activities directed towards amphibians and reptiles, fish, or insects and spiders. In terms of how organizations interact with wildlife, the majority were involved in wildlife observation or data collection, while around 20% promoted handling or feeding wildlife or wildlife photography. This analysis also confirmed at an organizational level the overlap between wildlife viewing and hunting and angling activities seen among individuals in the Wildlife Recreation Survey. Hunting and/or angling activities were promoted by almost a third of the Virginia wildlife viewing organizations included in the study. Importantly, the vast majority of these organizations were local, state, or federal government agencies.

Conservation activities. Based on their websites, wildlife viewing organizations in Virginia most commonly distribute resources, including providing online information about wildlife and wildlife viewing, offering products or services, and conferring grants and scholarships. The majority of organizations also hosted or connected viewers to social activities. While over 40% of organizations mentioned programming for youth on their websites, only three organizations described any sort of targeted focus on engaging ethno-racial minorities with wildlife or wildlife viewing. Almost half of organizations indicated involvement in habitat management, with ten times as many organizations involved in or supporting land stewardship on public lands, compared to private lands. Over a third of organizations collected data on wildlife, with far fewer involved in monitoring habitats or environmental

conditions. Overall, wildlife viewing organizations demonstrated the least involvement in activities such as advocating or fundraising for conservation causes.

APPLYING HUMAN DIMENSIONS RESEARCH

Results from each phase of the Wildlife Recreation Study were presented to the SAC and TAC during planning meetings, in order to support the development of data-driven goals, objectives, and strategies for this Wildlife Viewing Plan. Initial focus groups with wildlife recreationists provided rich and detailed insight into the recreation and conservation experiences of hunters, anglers, birders, and other wildlife viewers in their own words. Subsequent surveys with recreationists already affiliated with DWR and a random sample of the Virginia public produced more generalizable findings that were used to understand the wildlife viewing community as a whole and how wildlife viewing intersects with other kinds of wildlife recreation. Finally, a web-based stakeholder analysis provided information about the breadth of organizations and agencies that support wildlife viewing in Virginia and the resources and activities they provide. This analysis infused the planning process for this Wildlife Viewing Plan with information about the priorities of the many wildlife viewing organizations that were not represented on the SAC.



Part V

Values, Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

This section of the Wildlife Viewing Plan presents values, goals, objectives, and strategies to guide DWR's engagement with wildlife viewers in Virginia through 2031. The following **values statement** expresses core ideas about desirable ends (or outcomes) and means (general approaches that should be used to pursue those outcomes) for DWR's management of wildlife viewing opportunities. These values provide guidance on the principles and priorities that should orient all of DWR's efforts related to wildlife viewing under this plan.

VALUES STATEMENT

This Wildlife Viewing Plan is grounded in the following assertions:

1. Wildlife and their habitats have value and should be protected.
2. There can be no wildlife-related recreation without wildlife conservation. Active conservation, monitoring, and/or management are required in order to maintain healthy wildlife populations, flourishing habitats, and sustainable opportunities for wildlife-related recreation.
3. The wildlife and other natural resources of Virginia are a public trust, managed by the state for the benefit of all residents of the Commonwealth. This trust entails a shared privilege and responsibility to ethically engage with and steward Virginia's natural resources.
4. Wildlife organizations and agencies should work cooperatively to expand exposure to and experience with the unique and diverse wildlife of Virginia through education, outreach, and volunteer and wildlife viewing opportunities.

Wildlife viewing opportunities in Virginia should be:

Connected to wildlife conservation: Wildlife viewing opportunities should promote conservation and cultivate a stewardship ethic among Virginia residents.

Sustainable: Opportunities for wildlife viewing should be biologically, socially, and financially sustainable over time. Viewing opportunities should support, and not undermine, the health of wildlife and their habitats. Further, wildlife viewers should engage with wildlife responsibly, ethically, and respectfully, to ensure the sustainability of wildlife populations, habitats, and viewing opportunities. Additionally, viewing opportunities should be prioritized and supported with stable funding.

Diverse: Abundant and varied opportunities for engaging with the rich variety of naturally occurring wildlife and habitats in Virginia should be available throughout the state. High-quality wildlife viewing experiences should be accessible and promoted to all people in the Commonwealth.

Evidence-based: Wildlife viewing opportunities should be adapted over time, based on the best available science and information regarding, among other topics, the status of wildlife populations, the impacts of recreation on wildlife and their habitats, demographic and cultural change, and public preferences for viewing experiences.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

The following goals, objectives, and strategies build from the principles contained in the Values Statement above to provide DWR with direction for increasing participation in wildlife viewing and strengthening mutual support between the agency and wildlife viewers. For the purposes of this plan, **goals** are broad statements that capture overarching ideas about what DWR should strive to accomplish related to wildlife viewing. The following goals were co-produced by the SAC and TAC for this plan, based on initial planning conversations about the challenges to broader participation in wildlife viewing in Virginia and meaningful engagement between wildlife viewers and DWR. Each goal is accompanied by multiple **objectives** - specific targets or milestones that will contribute to the realization of plan goals. Unlike goals, objectives are generally more measurable and have determined timelines. Unless otherwise noted, the timeframe for achievement of all objectives in this plan is 2031, the end of this plan period. Each objective is followed by **strategies**, a suite of methods the agency might use to achieve the plan's objectives. The objectives and strategies for this plan were developed by members of the TAC, with assistance from researchers at Virginia Tech, to capture the conversations and ideas from combined meetings between the SAC and TAC. Actionable steps suggested during the planning process are referred to in this plan as **tactics** and are included in Appendix C, organized underneath the strategies that encompass them.

The four goals of the Wildlife Viewing Plan are presented below as distinct areas of work to be conducted by DWR. In reality, the goals of this plan are closely connected to each other and progress on any one goal or objective may contribute to the achievement of others. For example, as the agency works to improve communication about and access to its lands and waterways for wildlife viewing (*Goal 2, Objective 1*) and promote Virginia Bird and Wildlife Trail sites (*Goal 2, Objective 2*), it may also

facilitate increased engagement in wildlife viewing by diverse members of the public (*Goal 1*). Similarly, connecting wildlife viewers to volunteer opportunities that contribute to DWR's science and management needs (*Goal 3, Objective 1*) will likely deepen understanding of the agency's mission among wildlife viewers (*Goal 4, Objective 1*) and forge relationships with this constituency (*Goal 4, Objective 2*). All goals are also connected in that they each rely on a statewide approach to implementation that covers all agency regions, the allocation of sufficient staffing resources, and coordinated effort across agency divisions. The roles that individual divisions may play in implementing this Wildlife Viewing Plan are described in further detail in **Part VI: Implementation and Evaluation**.

GOAL 1: Connect diverse segments of the public to wildlife and wildlife viewing in Virginia

DWR's mission directs the agency to connect people to Virginia's outdoors through a variety of activities, specifically including wildlife viewing. Engaging diverse communities has been a challenge for fish and wildlife agencies across the country, but it is essential for fulfilling agency directives to govern wildlife resources as a trust for all members of the public (AFWA & WMI, 2019). Additionally, expanding participation in wildlife viewing can directly advance conservation, given the contributions wildlife viewers make to the scientific knowledge of wildlife populations (McKinley et al., 2017) and their participation in practices, from land stewardship to advocacy and donating, that support wildlife and habitats (Cooper et al., 2015). Goal 1 of the Wildlife Viewing Plan focuses on increasing participation in wildlife viewing by underrepresented groups and youth and families; supporting viewers with little or no experience so they form enduring connections to wildlife and viewing; and connecting other outdoor recreation groups, such as paddlers and campers, to wildlife viewing.

Objective 1: Increase participation by underrepresented gender, ethno-racial, and socio-economic groups in wildlife viewing events, programs, and activities led by DWR and partners

Multiple surveys have shown that the composition of the wildlife viewing community in Virginia is not representative of state-level demographics. Compared to their representation in Virginia's population, people who are female, non-White or Hispanic/Latino, younger than 54, and lower-income, and those who do not have a college degree are all underrepresented among viewers (Rockville Institute, 2018; Grooms et al., 2020) (see Part II, "State-level trends in wildlife viewing"). These patterns are especially pronounced among the wildlife recreationists who are already connected to DWR (Grooms et al., 2020). Social research has illuminated that these groups face unique constraints to outdoor recreation related to safety and access to information, transportation, fee-based locations, and equipment (e.g., Johnson et al., 2001; More & Stevens, 2017). A web-based analysis of the activities of wildlife viewing organizations in Virginia (Tsang et al., in review) indicated that there is substantial room for DWR to lead efforts within the state to increase inclusion of underrepresented groups in wildlife viewing (Tsang et al., in review). Agency leaders have recently laid a strong foundation for this work by hiring DWR's first Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer and passing a resolution that makes addressing diversity a priority. The following strategies build on this progress with best practices distilled from the literature for increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in conservation and outdoor recreation. They focus on increasing organizational and media representation (Eells, 2010; Bonta et al., 2015; Taylor, 2015; Frazer & Anderson, 2018); conducting outreach to underrepresented groups (Krymkowski et al., 2014; Metcalf, Burns, & Graefe, 2013; Robinson, 2005; Solop et al., 2003); and building partnerships with organizations that already work with these communities. Inclusivity can also be supported by increased agency attention to the ways in which race, gender, and socio-economic status have historically shaped and continue to shape people's relationships with wildlife and conservation (Finney, 2014; Merchant, 2010) and differences in what nature and wildlife viewing mean for diverse peoples (Gould et al., 2018).

Strategies:

1. Use best practices and market research to target communications to a diversity of wildlife viewers, including through increased representation of underrepresented groups in DWR communication materials.
2. Develop strategic partnerships with organizations focused on and representative of underrepresented groups to promote wildlife viewing and support social networks for viewers from these groups, especially those new to viewing.
3. Enhance the accessibility and relevance of DWR lands, programs, and resources for underrepresented groups.
4. Promote cultural competence and diversity and inclusion in agency approaches to hiring and training staff.

Objective 2: Increase engagement of urban populations in activities that connect people to wildlife and wildlife viewing

Since 1940, Virginia's human population has almost tripled and population centers have shifted from rural communities to growing urban metropolitan areas along interstate highways and the Atlantic coast. These demographic changes and accompanying urbanization and modernization have resulted in shifts in social values related to wildlife, the level and nature of public interest in wildlife recreation (Dietsch et al., 2018), and public perceptions of and trust in state fish and wildlife agencies (Manfredo et al., 2017). The SWOT analysis for this plan drew attention to declines in exposure to wildlife and increases in fear of wildlife and wild spaces among the public as an underlying threat to the ability of DWR to increase participation in and support for wildlife viewing in Virginia (see Part III: "SWOT Analysis"). The SAC and TAC also identified challenges emerging from divergent public preferences for encouraging versus controlling wildlife in urban areas and divergent wildlife values and interests between urban and rural communities. Finally, limited programming for urban wildlife viewing was discussed as a weakness in DWR's current efforts to promote wildlife viewing. While only a quarter of Virginia's population lives in rural areas, the Wildlife Recreation Survey indicated that almost half of wildlife viewers who are affiliated with DWR through license sales, agency communications, and citizen science are rural residents, with urban and suburban populations consequently underrepresented among viewers (Grooms et al., 2020). Engaging people who reside in urban and suburban areas in wildlife viewing thus poses unique challenges for DWR. The following strategies and potential tactics (see Appendix B) guide the agency to provide opportunities that promote positive engagement between these human communities and wildlife.

Strategies:

1. Expand access to and awareness of locations for wildlife viewing in and near urban areas.
2. Work with partners to develop and promote programs, events, and activities that support wildlife viewing in urban areas.
3. Develop communications materials that foster positive engagement between human communities and wildlife in urban areas.

Objective 3: Increase awareness of wildlife and opportunities for participating in wildlife viewing among youth and families.

Environmental and wildlife values are formed at a young age and are difficult to change in adulthood (Manfredo et al, 2016). Engaging with youth and their families is thus critical for wildlife agencies as they seek to establish appreciation for wildlife that will foster public engagement in wildlife recreation and conservation into the future. Recognizing the importance of these formative years, stakeholders involved

in this planning process consistently drew attention to the challenge of fostering interest in wildlife and wildlife viewing in younger generations. Research has shown that youth participation in outdoor recreation is constrained by increasingly limited free time and lack of independent access to transportation, while technology and new media can both distance youth from nature and connect them to opportunities for viewing and conserving wildlife they would not otherwise have (Barton, 2012). In particular, girls and Black youth spend less time outdoors and more time with electronic devices than boys and White youth, respectively, and have weaker connections to nature (Larson et al., 2019). Concerns about engaging youth with wildlife are reflected in the activities of wildlife viewing organizations across the state. Over 40% (n = 86) of the wildlife viewing organizations analyzed for this plan described youth-specific programming on their websites (Tsang et al, in review). The strategies below direct DWR to capitalize on existing energy and efforts, including the agency's own programs, to strengthen experiences with wildlife and wildlife viewing for youth.

Strategies:

1. Develop educational materials targeting families, with an emphasis on wildlife viewing, conservation of natural resources, and outdoor activities.
2. Create and aid the development of experiential learning activities that can be used or distributed by schools, partner organizations, libraries, and others (including museums, nature centers, and programs that serve youth) to encourage wildlife viewing.
3. Incorporate additional focus on Virginia's wildlife and ways to get involved in wildlife viewing and conservation into current agency-sponsored school programs.
4. Offer agency programs and agency-sponsored events that engage youth and families in wildlife viewing and habitat conservation.

Objective 4: Develop resources to help viewers with little or no experience progress from initial awareness of recreational opportunities to continued participation and identification as a wildlife viewer.

Results from the Virginia Wildlife Recreation Survey suggest that serving beginner viewers will require unique and targeted approaches. The survey found that individuals' level of experience with wildlife viewing was related to the frequency of their activities and the locations in which they viewed wildlife (Grooms et al., 2020). For example, compared to less experienced viewers, a higher percentage of more experienced viewers had travelled away from home to view wildlife. Viewers with less experience were also interested in different types of programs and services from DWR. Specifically among birders, those with less experience birding were more interested in agency programming for youth, viewing events and activities, and opportunities to recruit others to birding than more experienced birders. A web-based stakeholder analysis indicated that wildlife viewing organizations across Virginia are heavily involved in social engagement activities, including leading wildlife viewing trips and workshops, participating in community events, and hosting volunteers (Tsang et al., in review). The Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model (see Part III: "DWR and wildlife viewing") emphasizes the importance of this kind of social support for the development of the motivations and skills that individuals need to continue wildlife viewing and to identify as a wildlife viewer. Partner organizations can thus play an important role in the effectiveness of DWR's R3 efforts to recruit and retain participants in wildlife viewing.

Strategies:

1. Create and support resources, activities, programs, and agency-sponsored events that help new and inexperienced wildlife viewers get started.
2. Feature viewers with a variety of specialization levels in DWR media and communications.

3. Connect beginner viewers with partner organizations that can foster continued participation in wildlife viewing through viewing opportunities and social support.

Objective 5: Raise awareness of wildlife viewing among groups that participate in other forms of outdoor recreation, in order to enrich their outdoor experience and introduce a new and related activity.

Opportunities exist to expand appreciation for wildlife and participation in wildlife viewing among recreationists who are already spending time outdoors, but without a focus on wildlife, for example, running, hiking, camping, or paddling. The Wildlife Recreation Survey found that many of these recreationists are using VBWT sites and WMAs (Grooms et al., 2020), providing points of contact that could be used by the DWR to communicate the compatibility of other outdoor activities with wildlife viewing. The survey also revealed that many recreationists participate in wildlife viewing as well as hunting or angling; the DWR can build bridges between recreation groups by communicating the ways in which wildlife viewing while afield might enrich these other forms of wildlife recreation. The agency's R3 Plan approaches recreationists as having dynamic and overlapping identities and sets up the potential for participation in any one kind of outdoor recreation to provide an entry-point to participation in other forms of outdoor recreation (DWR, n.d.).

Strategies:

1. Partner with organizations and events that broadly promote engagement with nature and the outdoors in order to reach outdoor recreationists and introduce viewing as a companion activity.
2. Develop informational and communications materials that promote DWR, the VBWT, and wildlife viewing to specific outdoor recreationists (for example, paddlers, trail runners, mountain bikers, or campers).

GOAL 2: Provide a variety of wildlife viewing opportunities accessible to all in the Commonwealth

DWR manages over 206,000 acres of land and waterways in Virginia. Some of these properties, such as Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), are principally managed for conservation, while others, such as boating access sites, are principally managed for recreation. Results from the Wildlife Recreation Survey indicated that wildlife viewers feel DWR can better serve them by providing more access to locations for viewing birds and other wildlife and more information about the locations that are already available (Grooms et al., 2020). Goal 2 of the Wildlife Viewing Plan is oriented towards increasing opportunities for viewers to experience wildlife at destinations across the state and close to home.

Objective 1: Encourage increased wildlife viewing on agency lands and waters through habitat management and communications about these properties.

The lands and waterways owned and managed by DWR provide abundant opportunities for wildlife viewing, and are thus a critical resource for expanding participation in wildlife viewing and connecting wildlife viewers to the agency. However, a SWOT analysis (see Part III) conducted for this plan identified a number of agency weaknesses related to viewer access to and use of Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs). These challenges were related to the need for more communication about the purpose and locations of WMAs among the public and wildlife viewers, in particular, and the need for a strategy to address safety concerns related to multiple recreational activities on WMAs, specifically hunting and viewing. In line with the SWOT analysis, the Wildlife Recreation Survey found that just less than half of wildlife viewers had visited WMAs during the past 12 months for viewing birds or other wildlife, with use

of WMAs being higher among viewers who are already connected to DWR (Grooms et al., 2020). Being unaware of where to access WMAs was the primary factor constraining use of these properties among wildlife viewers who had not visited them in the past five years. Further, almost half of all wildlife viewers in the survey indicated that DWR could better support their viewing activities by providing more information about accessing WMAs (Grooms et al., 2020). The following strategies were developed to foster viewer interest in, awareness of, and access to all agency lands and waters, without undermining the fundamental conservation goals of these properties.

Strategies:

1. Continue to conduct holistic habitat management on DWR properties that supports opportunities for wildlife viewing and is consistent with the DWR Wildlife Action Plan.
2. Develop communications that clarify the purpose of agency properties, the methods used to manage them, and the ability of these lands and waters to support multiple forms of wildlife recreation.
3. Create simple, user-friendly communications and interpretation materials about wildlife viewing opportunities on various DWR properties, specific rules and restrictions for each property, amenities and accessibility, and appropriate safety information.
4. Ensure on-site signage is effective, with accurate, up-to-date information about access and clearly marked entry points and parking areas.
5. Continue to explore opportunities to provide wildlife viewing amenities on DWR lands and waters on a site-by-site basis.

Objective 2: Increase use of Virginia Bird and Wildlife Trail sites for wildlife viewing activities.

The Virginia Bird and Wildlife Trail (VBWT) is a curated collection of the best locations for viewing birds and other wildlife across the Commonwealth (see Part III: “Virginia Bird and Wildlife Trail”). This system of trails emerged as one of DWR’s strengths in the SWOT analysis for this plan (see Part III: “SWOT Analysis”). However, the Wildlife Recreation Survey indicated that the agency could work to increase promotion and awareness of this resource among wildlife viewers. Reported use of VBWT sites by viewers who responded to the Wildlife Recreation Survey was lower than rates of use for all other viewing locations listed in the survey, including other public areas, such as federal, state, and local parks, and privately-owned areas (Grooms et al., 2020). Use of VBWT sites was highest among birders affiliated with DWR; about 40% of birders affiliated with DWR, many of whom are Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas (VABBA2) volunteers, had used Trail sites for birding in the past year. As was the case with WMAs, use of VBWT sites by wildlife viewers is principally constrained by lack of awareness of how to access these properties (Grooms et al., 2020). In fact, because all national wildlife refuges, most state parks, many sites in Shenandoah National Park and George Washington Jefferson National Forest, and local parks throughout the state are designated as VBWT sites, it is possible that low reported rates of VBWT use actually reflect lack of awareness about the Trail. With hundreds of locations across the Commonwealth, including near urban centers, the VBWT is a key resource for connecting diverse public groups to opportunities for engaging with Virginia’s wildlife and wild spaces.

Strategies:

1. Expand promotion of the VBWT to improve awareness and understanding of the VBWT among wildlife viewers.
2. Revitalize partnerships with tourism agencies at state and local levels to achieve the VBWT’s nature tourism potential and benefits.

3. Strengthen relationships with the owners or managers of VBWT sites to ensure the continued accessibility of these sites for wildlife viewing and to promote opportunities for public engagement in wildlife viewing, habitat management, or other activities on VBWT sites.
4. Expand partnerships with counties, friend groups, wildlife viewing organizations, and other volunteers to support routine maintenance and reporting on VBWT sites.
5. Increase the accessibility of VBWT sites, including DWR properties, for viewers with physical disabilities, and highlight accessible VBWT sites.

Objective 3: Increase access to wildlife viewing opportunities at or close to home.

The overwhelming majority of wildlife viewers in the Wildlife Recreation Survey reported viewing birds or other wildlife around their own home or property in the past year; this includes people across varying levels of experience with viewing and strength of identity as a wildlife viewer (Grooms et al., 2020). DWR can support home-based viewing as a way to encourage broader participation in wildlife viewing across the state. In a state in which over 80% of land is privately owned, the agency can also contribute to wildlife viewing opportunities by supporting the conservation of wildlife habitat in backyards and on other private property. DWR provides resources and technical assistance to support the conservation of wildlife habitat on private lands through the work of agency-supported private lands biologists and online resources designed for homeowners, landowners, schools, and businesses. DWR's wildlife cameras, including the Richmond falcon cam, elk cam, and shad cam, also provide valuable, up-close wildlife viewing from anywhere with an internet connection. However, use of these resources is substantially higher among wildlife viewers who are already connected to DWR through license sales, communications, or citizen science (Grooms et al., 2020). The following strategies emphasize increased promotion of a variety of programs and resources that can recruit, retain, and reactivate participation in wildlife viewing close to home.

Strategies:

1. Ensure that DWR's Habitat for Wildlife resources are easily accessible, up-to-date, and widely promoted and distributed.
2. Offer and support programs that engage private landowners in increasing wildlife habitat and viewing opportunities on their properties.
3. Create and promote DWR resources, programs, and events that support wildlife viewing at or close to home.
4. Increase promotion of wildlife viewing opportunities external to the agency that viewers can participate in from or close to home.

GOAL 3: Promote wildlife and habitat conservation through wildlife viewing

Fish and wildlife agencies face sometimes competing directives to both connect people to wildlife and conserve natural resources in light of human impacts on species and habitats. Building on the notion that Virginia's wildlife resources are a public trust, managed by DWR for the benefit of current and future generations, the Values Statement for this plan consistently emphasizes the connection between wildlife viewing activities and the stewardship of wildlife resources in the state. Specifically, the Values Statement holds that wildlife viewing fundamentally relies on the conservation of wildlife and habitats; should support, and not undermine, conservation; and should provide an entry-point to conservation activities. The capacity of wildlife viewers and other recreationists outside of hunting and angling communities to advance wildlife conservation is central to the imperative for fish and wildlife agencies to meaningfully engage with these constituencies (AFWA & WMI, 2019). Goal 3 of the Wildlife Viewing Plan

thus seeks to maximize the connection between wildlife viewing and wildlife and habitat conservation by increasing opportunities for viewers to directly perform conservation activities and cultivating a culture of responsible wildlife viewing in the Commonwealth.

Objective 1: Increase volunteer engagement by connecting wildlife viewers to conservation opportunities.

The Wildlife Recreation Study documented considerable engagement of wildlife viewers in conservation activities including teaching others about wildlife conservation; improving wildlife habitat on public and private lands; advocating, voting, or fundraising related to conservation; and collecting data to contribute to wildlife science or management (Grooms et al., 2020; Tsang et al., in review). Surveyed wildlife viewers also indicated that they would be likely to engage in these same conservation activities specifically to support the work of DWR and that they are principally motivated to participate in conservation by the altruistic prospect of benefitting wildlife (Grooms et al., 2020). DWR can build on foundations established through its existing volunteer and citizen science projects and provide additional opportunities for wildlife viewers to contribute to the agency's conservation goals. In particular, the Virginia Breeding Bird Atlases (VABBA) sponsored by the agency have demonstrated the ability of citizen science projects to engage large numbers of wildlife viewers in conservation and with the agency (see Part III: "Virginia Breeding Bird Atlases"). This project has established a network of volunteers throughout the state that could be mobilized by other agency projects. Importantly, birders and other wildlife viewers made it clear in focus groups that their satisfaction with volunteer projects and their retention as volunteers relies on continued communication with the agency about the impact of their financial and scientific contributions (Grooms et al. 2019).

Strategies:

1. Develop resources that communicate avenues for wildlife viewers to engage in volunteer conservation activities, such as citizen science, habitat stewardship, outreach, and advocacy.
2. Provide opportunities for volunteers to assist with habitat stewardship on DWR lands to accomplish management goals.
3. Develop and promote citizen science projects that are aligned with DWR's management and conservation goals, and mechanisms for incorporating data generated by citizen scientists in DWR decision-making processes.
4. Work with partner organizations to create and coordinate volunteer opportunities for wildlife viewers and to recruit volunteers.
5. Implement best practices across volunteer programs to promote volunteer satisfaction and retention.
6. Develop pathways for volunteers to transition between projects in order to retain current agency volunteers and reactivate former volunteers.

Objective 2: Foster a culture of responsible wildlife viewing.

The SWOT analysis conducted for this plan identified human impacts on wildlife and habitats as an underlying threat to wildlife viewing opportunities in Virginia (see Part III). These impacts include broad patterns in urbanization and habitat loss in portions of the state, as well as the potential for outdoor recreationists to cause smaller-scale disturbance of wildlife and habitats in the course of their activities. DWR can play a role in fostering a culture of responsible engagement with wildlife by incorporating content about safety, ethics, and stewardship into new and existing points of contact between the agency and wildlife viewers. This objective brings together all three components of DWR's mission, directing the agency to connect people to wildlife while ensuring Virginia's natural resources are conserved for future generations by encouraging behaviors that protect both people and property.

Strategies:

1. Emphasize responsible wildlife viewing, including stewardship, ethics, and safety, in new and existing DWR communication materials, signage, and programs.
2. Work with partner organizations to incorporate stewardship, ethics, and safety into new and existing programs and events.

GOAL 4: Connect broader constituencies to the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources through wildlife viewing

The explicit inclusion of wildlife viewing in DWR's updated mission and R3 planning are evidence of increasing support within the agency for engaging with wildlife viewers as key constituents. The SWOT analysis conducted for this plan identified this inclusion of wildlife viewing in organizational planning as a key strength in the ability of DWR to engage the public in wildlife viewing and conservation. However, more actively engaging with and prioritizing the needs of wildlife viewers as stakeholders challenges the legacy and paradigm of the North American Model of Conservation (see Part III: "Wildlife viewing and state fish and wildlife agencies") and may require difficult institutional change (Jacobson et al., 2010). The final goal of the plan focuses specifically on fostering mutual understanding and support between wildlife viewers and DWR. Objectives under this goal aim to increase viewers' awareness of DWR and its relevance to their activities; promote two-way dialogue and trust between viewers and the agency; and increase financial connections between wildlife viewers and DWR's conservation work.

Objective 1: Increase awareness of the scope of the DWR's mission and its relevance to wildlife viewing.

Results from the Wildlife Recreation Study suggest that there is a need to increase awareness of and familiarity with DWR among the wildlife viewing community. In the survey, wildlife viewers who did not also identify as a hunter or angler were, on average, far less familiar with DWR than respondents who were hunters and anglers (Grooms et al., 2020). Further, focus groups revealed limited understanding of the ways in which DWR's mandated role applies to nongame wildlife conservation and recreation (Grooms et al., 2019). Many wildlife viewers perceived DWR to have an exclusive focus on hunting and fishing and referenced the agency's name (which was the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries at the time) as evidence of this. Some focus group participants described DWR's protection of nongame wildlife as a fortunate, but unintended consequence of managing habitat for hunting and fishing, rather than a key component of the agency's mission (Grooms et al., 2019). The agency's name change in early 2020 has the potential to clarify DWR's relevance to the conservation and enjoyment of all wildlife in Virginia, and this Wildlife Viewing Plan further details how the agency's efforts directly relate to wildlife viewing. Still, much remains to be done to increase understanding of the relevance of DWR's mission, vision, and values to wildlife viewing.

Strategies:

1. Develop a communication strategy to share the DWR mission, the role of DWR in conservation and outdoor recreation, and the agency's commitment to diverse constituencies, including wildlife viewers.
2. Sponsor, participate in, and organize events (virtual and in-person) that generate interest in wildlife viewing and engage the public with DWR staff and programs.

Objective 2. Increase dialogue and recognition between the agency and wildlife viewers to cultivate improved relationships.

Wildlife viewers, on average, have expressed lower levels of trust in DWR than other recreation groups, particularly in terms of trust in the agency to serve their recreation needs (Grooms et al. 2020). Focus groups with birders and other wildlife viewers highlighted the role of positive, personal interactions with agency employees in establishing and strengthening trust with the wildlife viewing community (Grooms et al. 2019). Trust of the agency by the wildlife viewing community is also shaped by perceptions of the agency's effectiveness and fairness (Grooms et al. 2019). The following strategies identify routes to foster increased trust and improved relationships with wildlife viewers by increasing internal training on the importance of wildlife viewing to DWR, strengthening external communication about the relevance of DWR's activities to wildlife viewing, and establishing mechanisms for two-way communication between viewers and the agency.

Strategies:

1. Train DWR staff about the importance of wildlife viewing to DWR's mission, agency programs that support wildlife viewing, and ways in which viewers support the agency (e.g., donations, licenses, volunteers) and the economy of Virginia through nature tourism.
2. Establish and communicate mechanisms through which wildlife viewers can provide input to the agency (e.g., by providing comments on revisions of the Virginia Wildlife Action Plan).
3. Expand the scope of the Executive Director's advisory group to include regular communication and opportunities for feedback on issues relevant to wildlife viewing organizations.
4. Seek opportunities for engagement with wildlife viewing-focused organizations and groups to build stronger relationships between wildlife viewers and the agency.
5. Highlight the relevance of DWR's work and Virginia Wildlife Action Plan to wildlife viewers through content published in partner and DWR communication channels.
6. Train agency volunteers to become "ambassadors" that can serve as a conduit for communication between DWR and the wildlife viewing community.
7. Foster ongoing engagement with agency and partner volunteers and recognition of their contributions.

Objective 3: Increase monetary contributions of wildlife viewers to support DWR's work with wildlife and habitat conservation.

The SWOT analysis conducted by the SAC and TAC for the Wildlife Viewing Plan identified funding under each analysis category; it emerged as a strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat that might support or challenge DWR's efforts to expand engagement in wildlife viewing and between wildlife viewers and the agency (see Part III: "SWOT Analysis"). Wildlife viewers currently support the operational and conservation work of DWR through a variety of mechanisms (see Part III: "Funding"). Programs like Restore the Wild, DWR's Nongame Fund, and transfer money from state sales tax on optics and other viewing-related equipment provide the infrastructure for wildlife viewers to financially support DWR's efforts. However, around 70% of agency funding comes from sales of hunting and fishing licenses and excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment transferred to the agency; another portion comes from registration and titling fees and sales and use taxes for boats. The lack of similarly consequential funding streams between wildlife viewers and DWR has raised concerns that activities that make more sizable financial contributions to the agency may continue to be prioritized over wildlife viewing (Grooms et al., 2019; also see Part III: "SWOT Analysis"). The Wildlife Recreation Survey indicated that Restore the Wild memberships have the potential to substantially engage viewers in financially supporting DWR. Over 23% of wildlife viewers who are not also hunters or anglers indicated that they are likely to support the

work of DWR by purchasing a Restore the Wild membership in the next 12 months (Grooms et al., 2020). Notably, 24% of these wildlife viewers who are not also hunters and anglers also indicated they are likely to purchase a Virginia hunting license, fishing license, or migratory waterfowl stamp (Grooms et al., 2020). The following strategies focus on increasing internal and external awareness of the ways in which wildlife viewers can and do support the work of DWR and exploring additional ways to fund habitat conservation and viewing-related programming.

Strategies:

1. Increase training and awareness of the ways in which wildlife viewers financially support the DWR.
2. Streamline and expand external promotion of existing funding mechanisms through which wildlife viewers can and already do support the DWR.
3. Implement DWR-sponsored events in which registration fees support wildlife or habitat conservation.
4. Explore opportunities to work with corporate or retail partners to generate funding for wildlife conservation and viewing-related programming.



Part VI Implementation and Evaluation

This section provides additional details to guide the implementation and evaluation of the goals, objectives, and strategies defined in **Part V** of DWR’s Wildlife Viewing Plan.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Successful implementation of this Wildlife Viewing Plan over the next 10 years relies on coordination and cooperation across agency divisions. The majority of strategies will be connected to the efforts of the Outreach Division and the Watchable Wildlife Program within the Wildlife Division. However, as evidenced by the range of DWR programs and services described in Part III, all agency divisions will be connected to the DWR’s wildlife viewing efforts. These contributions will vary widely based on the division, program, or position, and might include everything from the continued conservation of wildlife species and their habitats to development of the technological infrastructure needed for communicating with and managing data collected by wildlife viewers. Table 1 below outlines which agency divisions, and, in some cases programs, will be central to the implementation of each of the strategies outlined in this plan. All strategies are listed in the table, but agency staff will need to prioritize which strategies to focus on each year and over the course of the plan. It is expected that annual prioritization of strategies will be reflected in the operational plan developed for wildlife viewer R3 (recruitment, retention, and reactivation) each year.

While this table is a starting point, DWR staff will need to identify a key point person for coordinating implementation of the Wildlife Viewing Plan and an interagency committee, perhaps building from the TAC that developed this plan, that can lead efforts to move this plan forward. Additionally, while this plan was developed cognizant of current staffing and funding conditions within the DWR, its successful implementation will require ongoing assessment and filling of gaps in staff capacity required to implement plan strategies, achieve plan objectives, and realize the plan goals of promoting broader

participation in wildlife viewing and more meaningful engagement between wildlife viewers and the DWR. While some plan strategies can be effectively implemented with existing staff, full implementation of the plan will likely require additional human and financial resources. To facilitate effective implementation across agency divisions, components of this Wildlife Viewing Plan could be incorporated into existing Employee Work Profiles (EWPs), which outline the responsibilities of individual DWR employees and the percentage of their time allotted to each of those activities. Incorporation into EWPs would also contribute to annual evaluation of inputs, outputs, and outcomes related to this plan.

PLAN EVALUATION

This section outlines a possible framework for tracking incremental progress towards the plan's ambitious goals, both at the end of the plan, in 2031, and periodically throughout its ten-year timeframe. The framework is based on McCawley's (2001) *Logic Model for Program Planning and Evaluation*, which has been effectively used to evaluate another DWR R3 program (Valdez et al., 2019). This framework organizes evaluation using logic models, which are graphical representations of the small steps and cause-and-effect relationships that lead to desired results. In the framework, logic models are defined in relation to a **situation** - or the problem - addressed by the activity being evaluated. For this plan, logic models were constructed for each plan objective, since these objectives were developed to capture underlying issues in wildlife viewing in Virginia (for more information about the situation reflected in each objective, see Part V).

The logic models in this framework account for the inputs required for plan implementation, and differentiate between outputs (what the agency does) and outcomes (changes that occur as a result of what the agency does). **Inputs** are the human, financial, and material resources that are invested to accomplish plan objectives, and generally include staff, partner, or volunteer time; funding; partnerships with other agencies or organizations; research projects and analyses; and internal trainings. In this logic model, **outputs** capture the agency's activities and include both what the DWR does or produces as well as the relationships that are formed or strengthened by the activities of agency staff. For example, outputs might include programs or services that are delivered; facilities and signage that are installed; and program participants, customers, partners, and decision-makers who are reached. **Outcomes** are the impacts of agency efforts and are divided into short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes. *Short-term outcomes* generally focus on changes in awareness, knowledge, skills, or attitudes, while *medium-term outcomes* build upon short-term outcomes to produce changes in behavior or policies. For this plan, *long-term outcomes* refer to changes in the economic, social, environmental, or political conditions that shape wildlife viewing in Virginia. Desired long-term outcomes for this plan often reflect the language of objectives and fundamentally include increases in participation in wildlife viewing in the state, as well as increased engagement between the DWR and wildlife viewers through recreation, volunteer opportunities, and funding streams.

The following framework is intended only as a starting point. As agency staff begin to implement strategies and specific tactics, they will need to refine an approach to evaluation for each objective and develop processes for tracking outputs and measuring outcomes. Below each logic model is a list of possible measurement tools that can be used to evaluate outcomes. While *outputs* could be assessed on an annual basis, evaluation of *outcomes* will generally require in-depth measurements, often in relation to a baseline. The Wildlife Recreation Survey conducted in association with this plan (see Part IV), as well as myriad other state-wide or agency surveys, provide valuable baseline information for many outcomes. Follow-up data derived from future DWR or state-wide surveys will be important for evaluating those outcomes; others might be assessed using approaches such as Google Analytics, analysis of eBird or iNaturalist observations, or tracking requests for DWR programs, services, and resources.

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Appendix A: Stakeholder and Technical Advisory Committees

STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Bill Williams	Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory
Bob Schamerhorn	Virginia Audubon Society; wildlife photographer
Evan Spears	Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation; Virginia State Parks
Jennifer Dalke	The Nature Conservancy
Kathie Driscoll	The Nature Foundation at Wintergreen; Lynchburg Birding Club
Kristen Sinclair	Fairfax County Park Authority
Larry Mendoza	Virginia Herpetological Society
Laura Neale	Virginia Society of Ornithology
Lauren Cruz	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Eastern Virginia Rivers National Wildlife Refuge Complex
Lindsay Hermanns	Virginia Tech, Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS)
Mary Foster	Virginia Master Naturalists; Virginia Southside Bird Club
Meg Riddle	George Washington National Forest
Michelle Prysby	Virginia Master Naturalist program; Virginia Cooperative Extension
Nancy Vehrs	Virginia Native Plant Society

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Gray Anderson	Chief of Wildlife
George Braxton	Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer
John Copeland	Fisheries Biologist III
Nelson Lafon	Forest Wildlife Program Manager
Sergio Harding	Nongame Bird Conservation Biologist
Edward Herndon	Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3) Coordinator
Ron Hughes	Region 4 Lands and Facilities Manager
Stephen Living	Lands and Facilities Manager
Brian Moyer	Deputy Director of Outreach
Paige Pearson	Public Information Officer
Jessica Ruthenberg	Watchable Wildlife Biologist
Betsy Stinson	District Wildlife Biologist
Meagan Thomas	Watchable Wildlife Biologist
Jeff Trollinger	Assistant Chief, Aquatic Wildlife Resources Division
Rene Valdez	Human Dimensions Specialist

Appendix B: Potential Tactics for Plan Implementation

This appendix contains potential tactics that could be used to implement each of the strategies of the Wildlife Viewing Plan. As described in the plan, these tactics reflect ideas suggested during combined meetings between the SAC and TAC for engaging more people with wildlife, wildlife viewing, and DWR. The plan's strategies were developed from these tactics, and the original tactics are retained here to provide DWR staff with a menu of specific, actionable steps they might adopt and/or adapt as they seek to achieve the objectives of the Wildlife Viewing Plan.

GOAL 1: Connect diverse publics to wildlife and wildlife viewing in Virginia

Objective 1: Increase participation by underrepresented gender, ethno-racial, and socio-economic groups in wildlife viewing events, programs, and activities led by DWR and partners

- 1. Use best practices and market research to target communications to a diversity of wildlife viewers, including through increased representation of underrepresented groups in DWR communication materials.**
 - a. Conduct research and evaluation to quantify the effectiveness of current outreach programs targeting underrepresented groups.
 - b. Increase representation of women, BIPOC, and other underrepresented groups in DWR social media, blog articles and promotional materials.
- 2. Develop strategic partnerships with organizations focused on and representative of underrepresented groups to promote wildlife viewing and support social networks for viewers from these groups, especially those new to viewing.**
 - a. Develop strategic partnerships with groups such as Outdoor Afro and Latino Outdoors whose missions are to connect BIPOC with the outdoors; this ensures that programs targeting communities of color are led by individuals who are connected to and understand these communities.
 - b. Collaborate with Virginia chapters of MANRRS (Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences) to make connections between college-age people of color and wildlife viewing activities.
 - c. Promote an increase in diversity among members and staff (including leadership) of wildlife and outdoor recreation organizations and associated events.
 - d. Promote recruitment and stronger social networks for underrepresented groups through "bring a friend" events.
 - e. Explore partnership opportunities with other Virginia agencies, such as Virginia Housing and Virginia Department of Social Services, in order to reach underrepresented groups.
 - f. Promote and assist with partner programs such as the USFS Get Black Outside (GBO) snorkel and outdoor education event.
- 3. Enhance the accessibility and relevance of DWR lands, programs, and resources for underrepresented groups.**
 - a. Increase the relevance of DWR-sponsored festivals and events to underrepresented groups, and target promotion of events to these groups.
 - b. Target promotion of the Virginia Wildlife Grant Program to communities and youth organizations consisting of underrepresented groups.

- c. Promote access to DWR areas for wildlife or recreation organizations in order to promote participation and use among underrepresented groups, including through fee waivers.
 - d. Consider interpretive and educational signage at select WMAs in Spanish or other languages based on the area's demographic needs, beyond current regulatory signage.
- 4. Promote cultural competence and diversity and inclusion in agency approaches to hiring and training staff.**
 - a. Develop training and resources to increase cultural competency and awareness of the need for diversity and inclusion among DWR staff.
 - b. Provide leadership and guidance on how to engage BIPOC in wildlife viewing through publicly available resources on diversity and inclusion in wildlife viewing designed for wildlife professionals and wildlife viewers.
 - c. Recruit qualified candidates from underrepresented groups in an effort to increase diversity of agency employees, particularly among biological, law enforcement, and education/outreach staff.

Objective 2: Increase engagement of urban populations in activities that connect people to wildlife and wildlife viewing

- 1. Expand access to and awareness of locations for wildlife viewing in and near urban areas.**
 - a. Highlight locations in or near urban areas to see birds and wildlife that are easy to access via public transportation and have amenities.
 - b. Consider how to work with partners to acquire and manage land in urban areas for wildlife viewing.
- 2. Work with partners to develop and promote programs, events, and activities that support wildlife viewing in urban areas.**
 - a. Increase outreach to educators in urban areas, with a particular focus on increasing their understanding of how to access DWR resources and funding, such as the Virginia Wildlife Grant Program.
 - b. Coordinate small group events and partnerships in urban areas, including through social media.
 - c. Develop programs or resources that help urban communities develop pollinator gardens and support native habitats.
- 3. Develop communications materials that foster positive engagement between human communities and wildlife in urban areas.**
 - a. Use social media or create educational materials to promote and highlight positive human encounters with wildlife in urban areas.

Objective 3: Increase awareness of wildlife and opportunities for participating in wildlife viewing among youth and families.

- 1. Develop educational materials targeting families, with an emphasis on wildlife viewing, conservation of natural resources, and outdoor activities that can be done together.**
 - a. Develop resources for parents, guardians, and caregivers to help them recognize and cultivate youth interest in wildlife viewing.
 - b. Determine if a list of nature camps in Virginia currently exists (for example, compiled by Virginia Tourism) and promote it by sharing links on DWR's website.
 - c. Leverage social media platforms and innovative technological tools for reaching and

engaging younger people.

- 2. Create and aid the development of experiential learning activities that can be used or distributed by schools, partner organizations, libraries, and others (including museums, nature centers, and programs that serve youth) to encourage wildlife viewing.**
 - a. Help schools and other organizations connect youth to viewing by developing curriculum or program kits about birding and viewing (such as Idaho's Bird by Bird Program).
 - b. Develop an easy to follow schoolyard habitat program with curriculum kits and planting guides for teachers.
 - c. Develop video guides and kits or boxes available through local libraries for engaging kids in establishing backyard habitat.
 - d. Explore how to gradually build programs for loaning or renting viewing equipment (e.g., binoculars, field guides, tents, etc.) or support grant programs that could increase equipment purchases and loaning programs by partner organizations. *(Also addresses Goal 1, Objective 4)*
 - e. Continue to leverage the role of the agency on the Virginia Department of Education's Standards of Learning Committee to ensure content about wildlife and viewing are included in state standards, as conservation currently is, at all grade levels.
- 3. Incorporate additional focus on Virginia's wildlife and ways to get involved in wildlife viewing and conservation into current agency-sponsored school programs.**
 - a. Enhance the connection between DWR and Project Wild by including content specific to DWR and Virginia's wildlife in Project Wild programming, which is a national curriculum and not state-specific. *(Also addresses Goal 4, Objective 1)*
- 4. Offer agency programs and agency-sponsored events that engage youth and families in wildlife viewing or habitat conservation or establishment.**
 - a. Increase direct agency interaction with schools through DWR-specific programs in schools or supporting field activities (e.g. taking school groups to WMAs).
 - b. Collaborate with other organizations on "train the trainer" programs to train (and possibly certify) wildlife recreationists to work with youth.
 - c. Develop and expand current programs that encourage youth and families to participate in wildlife viewing, including competitions and games (for example, bio blitzes utilizing iNaturalist/ Wildlife Mapping, Kids in the Woods Day, 4-H, and youth programs hosted by Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers).
 - d. Develop short weekend programs for kids like those offered by Home Depot to build youth interest in wildlife and habitats.
 - e. Bring wildlife viewing opportunities to non-nature camps, and provide youth something tangible to take home from the experience.
 - f. Determine where families usually go when they participate in outdoor activities, and develop methods to bring wildlife viewing opportunities to those locations.

Objective 4: Develop resources to help viewers with little or no experience progress through the Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model from awareness to avid viewer.

- 1. Create and support resources, activities, programs, and agency-sponsored events that help new and inexperienced wildlife viewers get started.**
 - a. Provide information on wildlife viewing activities at a very introductory level, including how to view common wildlife species in backyards and local parks, and how to have a safe and satisfying experience.

- b. Provide training or guidelines for birding/viewing guides on how to support viewers with less experience at festivals.
 - c. Expand opportunities for introductory birding/wildlife viewing classes beyond the festival circuit.
 - d. Conduct research to inform better marketing of good places to go wildlife viewing for amateur viewers; while more experienced viewers may be interested in sites with more diversity and/or higher probability of viewing rare species, beginners might be more interested in sites with a high probability of seeing more common species.
 - e. Provide training for DWR volunteers on how to follow best practices in education and interpretation to engage the public in wildlife viewing opportunities.
- 2. Feature viewers with a variety of specialization levels in DWR media and communications.**
 - a. Offer diverse mechanisms for viewers to share their experiences, especially how they were introduced to wildlife viewing, and promote these stories through social media and DWR's other communication channels.
 - b. Represent a spectrum of specialization levels, including amateur viewers, in agency media and messaging, and tailor current agency messaging and programming to be welcoming to first-time/amateur viewers.
 - 3. Connect beginner viewers with partner organizations that can foster continued participation in wildlife viewing through viewing opportunities and social support.**
 - a. Include information on the DWR website that directs people to birding and viewing clubs in Virginia, in order to connect first-time/amateur viewers to existing social support systems.

Objective 5: Raise awareness of wildlife viewing among groups that participate in other forms of outdoor recreation, in order to enrich their outdoor experience and introduce a new and related activity.

- 1. Partner with organizations and events that broadly promote engagement with nature and the outdoors in order to reach outdoor recreationists and introduce viewing as a companion activity.**
 - a. Collaborate with current programs that encourage broad participation in wildlife viewing or outdoor recreation (e.g., The City-Nature Challenge; The River Rock Festival in Richmond, GO Outside Festival in Roanoke, VA).
 - b. Conduct agency tabling or programming at major outdoor events and festivals (e.g., GoFest, Virginia State Fair).
- 2. Develop informational and communications materials that promote the DWR, VBWT, and wildlife viewing to specific outdoor recreationists (for example, paddlers, trail runners, mountain bikers, or campers).**
 - a. Develop a search or filter function for the VBWT section of the DWR website that allows people to search sites by available facilities (such as trails, kayak/canoe rentals and launches, campsites, etc.) and a plan for maintaining the website.
 - b. Increase awareness and use of VBWT sites by people who are paddling, hiking, and camping by developing targeted ads for the VBWT in appropriate publications.
 - c. Contribute to and promote partner programs that advance the mission of the DWR through aquatic outdoor recreation (e.g., USFS snorkeling programs, bioblitz events, "Friends of" groups promoting kayaking/wildlife viewing from the water, and local museums and nature centers with native species fish tanks, etc.)

- d. Communicate with hunters, anglers, and non-wildlife recreationists (including trail runners, hikers, and paddlers) about the connections between their current recreation activities and wildlife viewing (for example, share birding guides with hunters and anglers or develop blog posts about wildlife that can be seen while hiking).
- e. Work with partner organizations to provide materials about wildlife viewing and the VBWT (for example, brochures, videos, or presentations) to outdoor recreation clubs and retailers. *(Also addresses Goal 2, Objective 3)*
- f. Develop informational materials geared toward running/hiking/biking communities on best practices for minimizing their impact on wildlife and habitats while recreating.
- g. Work with historic sites and battlefields that are VBWT sites to develop materials about wildlife viewing for their visitors.

GOAL 2: Provide a variety of wildlife viewing opportunities accessible to all in the Commonwealth

Objective 1: Encourage increased wildlife viewing on agency lands and waters through habitat management and messaging about these properties.

- 1. Continue to conduct holistic habitat management on DWR properties that includes all wildlife and is consistent with the DWR Wildlife Action Plan.**
 - a. Consider a wider breadth of wildlife in habitat management.
 - b. Promote management practices that foster diverse habitat assemblages that support native wildlife communities.
 - c. Continue to incorporate habitat enhancement during the planning phase for WMA management strategies.
 - d. Develop metrics for measuring progress towards and achievement of management goals.
- 2. Develop communications that clarify the purpose of agency properties and the ability of these lands and waters to support multiple forms of wildlife recreation.**
 - a. Work on messaging in order to raise the profile of WMAs among wildlife viewers and clarify their unique mission and management.
 - b. Consider ways to highlight the ability of WMAs to support both hunting and viewing activities, especially through infrastructure and information about usage.
 - c. Address perceived safety issues and interference associated with a multi-use approach to recreation on WMAs.
 - d. Encourage use of WMAs by viewers on Sundays, when hunting (mostly) does not occur.
- 3. Create simple, user-friendly communications about wildlife viewing opportunities on various DWR properties, specific rules and restrictions for each property, amenities and accessibility, and appropriate safety information.**
 - a. Develop and continually publicize multimedia resources that provide a general overview of WMAs, including how to have a safe and satisfying experience, required access fees, and payment options.
 - b. Develop and publicize online resources that provide clarity about various management and recreation activities that occur on individual WMAs, since these activities vary across WMAs, counties, and months.
 - c. Ensure that all WMAs are listed as part of the VBWT, have VBWT signage, and that WMA webpages connect to the detailed wildlife viewing info provided in the VBWT online guide for each site.

- d. Advertise the “Find Wildlife App” to a wider audience.
- e. Promote wildlife habitat management/conservation and viewing opportunities on WMAs through on-site interpretive signage accessible to WMA visitors (such as what has been done for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers at Big Woods WMA).
- f. Develop an interactive, online resource to show the location, available resources, and differences in facilities at WMAs across Virginia (e.g., online GIS map or app), including images, so viewers know what to expect when visiting these properties.
- 4. Ensure on-site signage is effective, with accurate, up-to-date information about access and clearly marked entry points and parking areas.**
 - a. Ensure that entry points for public lands are easily located; update maps online and on paper to include newer public land designations.
 - b. Ensure parking areas are clearly labelled, especially when they are on the side of the road, and make clear, easy-to-find parking maps available online.
 - c. Provide signage that indicates when and why public lands are closed, and make this information easily accessible online.
 - d. Provide more information on-site at public lands about license and fee requirements, including signs detailing options for paying via kiosks, online, or through the app.
- 5. Continue to explore opportunities to provide wildlife viewing amenities on DWR lands and waters on a site-by-site basis.**
 - a. Assess, account for, and aim to avoid impacts to wildlife and habitats from new infrastructure on DWR lands and waters.
 - b. Strategically install viewing amenities based on the level and nature of property use and as staff and budgets allow.

Objective 2: Increase use of VBWT sites for wildlife viewing activities.

- 1. Expand promotion of the VBWT to improve awareness and understanding of the VBWT among wildlife viewers.**
 - a. Promote WMA and VBWT sites through multiple media channels (e.g., email communications and newsletters, social media, podcasts).
 - b. Work with partners (for example, tourism entities, nature centers, and outdoor retailers) to increase marketing of and distribution of materials about the VBWT.
 - c. Improve online information to address widespread lack of understanding about what VBWT sites are, where they are located, what can be expected on the sites, and the fact that they encompass a diverse array of both public and private lands, managed by diverse entities; clarify that the VBWT resource compiles all the best lands for birding and wildlife viewing in one place.
 - d. Assess issues associated with VBWT signage, and address these challenges as resources allow.
 - e. Continue to update the design of and content about the VBWT on the DWR website.
 - f. Continue to maintain ads for the VBWT in internal and external print materials and social media platforms (e.g., Virginia Wildlife Magazine).
 - g. Expand the series of regional VBWT brochures to include more parts of the Commonwealth and make these available in DWR’s regional offices.
 - h. Train DWR staff on the opportunities provided by the VBWT for wildlife viewers and available VBWT promotional materials
- 2. Revitalize partnerships with tourism agencies at state and local levels to achieve the VBWT’s nature tourism potential and benefits.**

- a. Develop programs, educational content and/or materials for localities that compile available data on nature tourists, their growth nationally and in Virginia, their contribution to Virginia's economy, and DWR programs that can help them connect with this audience and support their locality's conservation efforts.
 - b. Continue DWR's sponsorship, support, and participation in wildlife viewing festivals in Virginia.
 - c. Develop materials to help localities promote their local VBWT sites/loops.
- 3. Strengthen communication with the owners or managers of VBWT sites to support the continued accessibility of these sites for wildlife viewing and to promote opportunities for public engagement in wildlife viewing, habitat management, or other activities on VBWT sites.**
 - a. Develop a mechanism for collecting information about events happening at VBWT sites so that DWR can help communicate these events or partner in hosting them.
 - b. Develop programs that incentivize or reward wildlife viewing on public lands (for example, visiting VBWT sites or loops within the state).
 - c. Work closely with VBWT site owners or managers and DWR land managers to promote opportunities for public engagement in wildlife viewing, habitat management, or other activities on VBWT sites.
 - d. Continue to provide small grants to localities seeking funding for wildlife viewing amenities on their public lands.
- 4. Expand partnerships with counties, friend groups, wildlife viewing organizations, and other volunteers to support routine maintenance and reporting on VBWT sites.**
 - a. Connect with local bird clubs and other recreation groups to investigate whether they know about and use the VBWT and reintroduce them, if necessary.
 - b. Strengthen partnerships with counties, friend groups, and volunteers to help reduce the costs and maintenance burden of facilities on public lands.
 - c. Establish mechanisms for providing feedback on VBWT sites, including suggesting the addition or removal of sites, and communicate with viewers about these opportunities.
 - d. Seek creative solutions to waste management on public lands.
 - e. Promote the Adopt-a-Trail program to wildlife viewing organizations to increase awareness of VBWT.
 - f. Work with current citizen science participants (such as VABBA2) to promote viewing opportunities on public land to others.
- 5. Increase the accessibility of VBWT sites, including DWR properties, for viewers with physical disabilities, and highlight accessible VBWT sites.**
 - a. Improve the accessibility of information about the availability and locations of barrier-free and accessible trails at WMAs.
 - b. Where financially feasible, increase the number of barrier-free and ADA-compliant facilities on DWR properties.
 - c. Expand existing DWR grant programs to localities to include providing infrastructure or amenities, such as trails and viewing platforms, that improve the accessibility of VBWT sites for wildlife viewing.
 - d. Add VBWT sites to the map on Birdability.org in order to increase access to information about the accessibility of VBWT sites.

Objective 3: Increase access to wildlife viewing opportunities from or close to home.

- 1. Ensure that DWR's Habitat for Wildlife resources are easily accessible, up-to-date, and widely promoted and distributed.**

- a. Ensure that backyard habitat and home-based viewing materials on the DWR website are easily accessible, up-to-date, and promoted and advertised.
 - b. Partner with Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, Native Plant Partnership, and other groups (Audubon, Virginia Native Plant Society) to offer online and in-person resources for establishing backyard habitat. Ensure that this information is accessible for beginners and relevant for people with limited financial means and varying acreage.
 - c. Connect people to the grass-roots “Homegrown National Park” ideas of Doug Tallamy by sharing links to his books and recorded presentations in backyard habitat materials and on the DWR website.
 - d. Update and maintain a list of available programming for backyard habitat certification through partner organizations (such as the National Wildlife Federation).
 - e. Partner with nurseries to ensure people can find native plants that are in limited supply.
 - f. Expand and promote DWR’s Habitat Partners Program to engage businesses, private landowners, and schools in wildlife viewing, wildlife conservation, and DWR programs.
 - g. Develop programs or resources to encourage and help Homeowners’ Associations to mitigate habitat loss and establish green spaces for wildlife viewing in residential common areas.
- 2. Offer and support programs that engage private landowners in increasing wildlife habitat and viewing opportunities on their properties.**
- a. Work with DWR’s private lands biologists to connect wildlife viewers to information about Farm Bill programs for habitat conservation on private land and develop management plans for their properties.
 - b. Provide training opportunities for private landowners and public lands volunteers involving habitat management practices and tools.
 - c. Work with DWR’s private lands biologists and interested private landowners to create public access to private properties for wildlife viewing.
 - d. Work with stakeholders such as private landowners, Cooperative Extension/4-H, Farm Bureau, and Virginia Working Landscapes to include content on the value of working lands for wildlife in educational and outreach materials.
 - e. Work with Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and Virginia Department of Forestry to include information about watchable wildlife in ongoing landowner conservation programs.
- 3. Create and promote DWR and partnered resources, programs, and events that support wildlife viewing from or close to home.**
- a. Use web-based platforms (for example, Zoom and Facebook Live) to host virtual wildlife viewing programming for people at home.
 - b. Communicate to broader audiences about DWR’s wildlife cameras.
 - c. Provide information on bird feeders, bird baths, and nest boxes as introductory ways that people can interact with wildlife in their yards.
- 4. Increase promotion of wildlife viewing opportunities external to the agency that viewers can participate in from or close to home.**
- a. Increase outreach for wildlife-oriented programs that do not require travel (for example, programs like Birding Bingo and North Carolina’s Candid Critter Program).
 - b. Promote wildlife mapping projects that allow viewers to share what they see in their backyards.

GOAL 3: Promote wildlife and habitat conservation through wildlife viewing

Objective 1: Increase volunteer engagement by connecting wildlife viewers to conservation opportunities.

- 1. Develop resources that communicate avenues for wildlife viewers to engage in volunteer conservation activities, such as citizen science, habitat stewardship, outreach, and advocacy.**
 - a. Develop resources for adults and youth that provide guidance on how to get involved in volunteer opportunities.
 - b. Add messaging on how to do outreach related to wildlife viewing and on viewing ethics to existing DWR resources, including the agency website and resources being developed by the Watchable Wildlife Program.
 - c. Provide educational materials on wildlife viewing, ethics, conservation, etc. to county and local government nature centers and other nonformal environmental education organizations. Consider connecting with some of these centers through the Virginia Association for Environmental Education.
 - d. Communicate the importance of voting and advocacy as conservation behaviors to wildlife viewers.
 - e. Foster conservation actions by localities through the promotion of the VBWT, nature tourism, and their benefits to Virginia.
- 2. Provide opportunities for volunteers to assist with habitat stewardship on DWR lands to accomplish management goals.**
 - a. Organize and host a DWR volunteer event that would appeal to multiple kinds of recreationists (e.g. an event focused on habitat restoration on a WMA). *(Also addresses Goal 2, Objective 3)*
 - b. Work with public lands staff to identify needs for volunteer help with public lands maintenance and, with oversight from DWR staff, use volunteers to help with low-risk opportunities for habitat stewardship. Learn from the successes of other habitat stewardship volunteer programs, including the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's habitat restoration efforts, DCR's Natural Area Stewards, and similar programs in The Nature Conservancy.
 - c. Consider how to provide oversight and coordination of volunteers for habitat management, including through the engagement of regional coordinators.
 - d. Consider "Friends of [] WMA" groups as a useful structure for organizing and garnering support and volunteer labor for select WMA sites. Ensure that these groups have strong staff involvement and include multiple user groups.
 - e. Develop stewardship committees for certain public lands; these volunteers could check trails, report downed trees, vandalism, or illegal behavior, control weeds, etc.
- 3. Develop and promote citizen science projects that are aligned with DWR's management and conservation goals, and mechanisms for incorporating data generated by citizen scientists in DWR decision-making processes.**
 - a. Work with DWR biologists to identify data needs that could be fulfilled through volunteer engagement and determine the best way to meet these needs.
 - b. Align the existing Wildlife Mapping Program (which uses iNaturalist) to targeted wildlife or habitat goals to make use of the wealth of data generated by this program.
 - c. Continue to work with the DWR Environmental Services staff to ensure that data collected by volunteers can be integrated with Virginia Fish and Wildlife Information

- Service (VaFWIS).
- d. Move from paper-based to digital data collection for the Adopt-a-Trail program, so data can be more easily submitted by volunteers and processed by staff. Consider using the Collector for ArcGIS app which integrates with ArcGIS to support decision-making and can collect data offline when there is no internet/cellular connectivity.
 - e. Conduct a virtual DWR bioblitz challenge (e.g., using iNaturalist) in order to collect data and potentially build regional networks for wildlife viewing.
 - f. Consider use of Chronolog, a useful tool for volunteers to track plant community progression over time, using photos tied to date/waypoint.
- 4. Work with partner organizations to create and coordinate volunteer opportunities for wildlife viewers and to recruit volunteers.**
- a. Grow existing relationships (e.g., with Ducks Unlimited, Virginia Master Naturalists) and form new partnerships to build volunteer capacity.
 - b. Promote volunteer opportunities across the email list-servs of partner organizations.
 - c. Ensure adequate staff capacity for coordination of volunteer opportunities created within the agency so that volunteers can be connected to opportunities that match their interests and needs.
 - d. Develop or coordinate “train the trainer” programs in partnership with other volunteer organizations to develop recruiters/ambassadors. People who engage in citizen science become great ambassadors for wildlife, as well as generate valuable data.
 - e. To work within DWR’s limited staff capacity, partner with wildlife viewing organizations to increase education/outreach efforts related to wildlife viewing through DWR-trained volunteers.
 - f. Engage with organizations that are already connected to a large number of diverse members (for example, The Wildlife Society, American Fisheries Society, and Trout Unlimited) in order to expand connections to stakeholders that could be mobilized to support conservation or the agency through advocacy or voting.
- 5. Implement best practices across volunteer programs to promote volunteer satisfaction and retention; this includes following through on promised deliverables and maintaining communication about outcomes.**
- a. Catalog existing DWR volunteer programs to understand what programs are currently available.
 - b. Compile and implement best practices for volunteer programs, including offering training for DWR staff who develop and coordinate volunteer programs.
 - c. Ensure that data collected through citizen science programs are used and shared and their application is communicated to volunteers.
 - d. Ensure adequate funding for the final products of the 2nd Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas (VABBA2) (a book, interactive website, or both) in order to see this project to its conclusion and meet the expectations of the over 1,400 volunteers who have participated in the Atlas.
 - e. Continue communicating with VABBA2 volunteers and the general public on the progress that DWR is making toward the final Atlas product.
 - f. Continue to create additional, discrete opportunities for citizen science, including engaging with VABBA2 volunteers by building upon the success of the Atlas and creating new volunteer opportunities for this existing network.

Objective 2: Foster a culture of responsible wildlife viewing.

- 1. Emphasize responsible wildlife viewing, including stewardship, ethics, and safety, in new and existing DWR communication materials, signage, and programs.**
 - a. Increase ethics-focused language in DWR materials (e.g. publications, signs on public lands managed by DWR, and the DWR website) and events.
 - b. Promote a culture of responsible wildlife viewing (stewardship, ethics, and safety) among wildlife viewers through education, including information about current rules related to handling and impacting wildlife on public lands.
 - c. Develop and use consistent agency messaging and guidelines for feeding birds and other wildlife.
 - d. Maintain awareness among DWR staff of the unintended consequences of education initiatives, including the potential for generating malicious activity or enabling poaching (by making specific wildlife locations known).
 - e. Emphasize tangible lessons over general statements in responsible viewing materials. For example, start with a specific problem (e.g. snake fungus), then zoom out to stewardship best practices that address that problem (e.g. disinfecting equipment).
- 2. Work with partner organizations to incorporate stewardship, ethics, and safety into new and existing programs and events.**
 - a. Incorporate content on wildlife viewing, as well as DWR conservation and ethics priorities, into Virginia Master Naturalist volunteer training so they can teach others when they do outreach.
 - b. Partner with Virginia Master Naturalists and others who host booths at community events to coordinate on booth messaging, materials, and content.
 - c. Work with partner organizations to encourage inclusion of ethics components and modeling of ethical viewing behavior during existing events.
 - d. Work with partner organizations to host workshops on responsible wildlife viewing, ideally as joint efforts between different types of wildlife viewing groups (e.g. ornithological and herpetological groups) to promote cross-pollination and the sharing of ideas.
 - e. Use education on responsibly and safely handling wildlife (e.g., lessons on how to safely move turtles out of the road) as a tool for engaging people with wildlife in the first place.

GOAL 4: Connect broad constituencies to the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources through wildlife viewing

Objective 1: Increase awareness of the scope of the DWR's mission and its relevance to wildlife viewing.

- 1. Develop a communication strategy to share the DWR mission, the role of DWR in conservation and outdoor recreation, and the agency's commitment to diverse constituencies, including wildlife viewers.**
 - a. Communicate about the role of DWR in wildlife viewing and recent changes within the agency that reflect its commitment to broader constituencies.
 - b. Communicate about the State Wildlife Action Plan, how it focuses on conserving wildlife to benefit people, and how it is a blueprint of strategies for the agency to address Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

- c. Further improve the visibility and user-friendliness of the DWR website, and consider the use of software to increase the relevance of DWR's website to browser search hits.
 - d. Consider use of Public Service Announcements as a mechanism for sharing information about the DWR with the general public.
 - e. Analyze DWR's social media output and user responses as part of a broader evaluation of DWR communication related to wildlife viewing; modify messaging as needed in order to increase viewership and reach of wildlife viewing communications.
 - f. Promote existing documents developed by other organizations that describe the role of state agencies and outline policy actions that can support DWR's work. For example, NABCI's 2019 State of the Birds report contains data on the role of state agencies in recovering U.S. bird populations and a supplemental insert detailing the importance of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) for supporting this conservation work.
 - g. Increase or clarify communication about the ways in which the DWR is funded.
- 2. Sponsor, participate in, and organize events (virtual and in-person) that generate interest in wildlife viewing and engage the public with DWR staff and programs.**
- a. Expand social media outreach through social media-based challenges (e.g., try to visit every VBWT site and post a picture to prove you were there) and advertisement of day events, especially those that relate to citizen science.
 - b. Increase communication/branding related to existing education programs in schools that are sponsored by DWR to increase awareness among parents of DWR's role in youth programming.
 - c. Promote better relationships between wildlife recreationists and conservation officers.
 - d. Consider how to generate more public interaction with DWR staff beyond law enforcement and regulations to increase awareness of the agency's broader mission and activities.

Objective 2. Increase dialogue and recognition between the agency and wildlife viewers to cultivate improved relationships.

- 1. Train DWR staff about the importance of wildlife viewing to DWR's mission, agency programs that support wildlife viewing, and ways in which viewers support the agency (e.g., donations, licenses, volunteers) and the economy of Virginia through nature tourism.**
 - a. Learn from the engagement strategies being used by other agencies (such as State Parks).
- 2. Establish and communicate mechanisms through which wildlife viewers can provide input to the agency (e.g., by providing comments on revisions to the Virginia Wildlife Action Plan).**
 - a. Get a schedule of agency Board meetings and announcements about scoping meetings to viewing clubs and organizations so they can share these meetings with their membership and promote attendance.
 - b. Sponsor and participate in wildlife and outdoor festivals in order to connect with and hear from new and diverse audiences.
- 3. Expand the scope of the Executive Director's advisory group to include regular communication and opportunities for feedback on issues relevant to wildlife viewing organizations.**
 - a. Build beyond the Director's Advisory Group to establish a consistent way to meet and talk with partner organizations about issues that are relevant to the viewing community. Consider whether it would be useful to have a separate meeting with just birding and viewing groups, or whether they could be a specialist subset within the Advisory Group.

4. **Seek opportunities for engagement with wildlife viewing-focused organizations and groups to build stronger relationships between wildlife viewers and the agency.**
 - a. Continue to encourage DWR staff to provide talks, guided walks, and programs for organizations and groups.
 - b. Continue to encourage DWR staff to participate in wildlife viewing-focused organizations and groups and associated events and festivals.
 - c. Continue to encourage DWR staff to serve as advisors to Master Naturalist chapters and as instructors for training courses and continuing education programs.
5. **Highlight the relevance of the DWR's work and Virginia Wildlife Action Plan to wildlife viewers through content published in partner and DWR communication channels.**
 - a. Publicize DWR's partnerships related to wildlife viewing, in order to highlight the agency's relationships with groups that viewers already identify with.
 - b. Actively solicit and encourage articles from partner organizations for the monthly e-newsletter *Notes from the Field* to increase content that viewers would be interested in.
 - c. Utilize the Facebook and social media pages of wildlife viewing organizations to reach wildlife viewers who aren't tied to DWR communications in other ways; post a question about agency activities related to viewing that DWR wants feedback on
6. **Train agency volunteers to become "ambassadors" that can serve as a conduit for communication between DWR and the wildlife viewing community.**
 - a. Explore potential connections to Wildlife Ambassadors; these volunteers could be involved in sharing agency messages, but also hearing from the viewing and birding communities and then bringing needs and interests back to the agency.
7. **Foster ongoing engagement with agency and partner volunteers and recognition of their contributions.**
 - a. Build upon the goodwill and communication infrastructure generated through VABBA2 to continue engaging with project volunteers as the Atlas transitions from field data collection to data analysis and review and to publication over the next 4-5 years.
 - b. Maximize distribution of this Wildlife Viewing Plan and information about the public comment period to give the birding and viewing communities an opportunity to weigh in and to demonstrate interest from the agency in connecting with these stakeholders.
 - c. Publicize viewer contributions to agency conservation (for example, Master Naturalist hours monetized), in order to address sentiments (among traditional constituents or agency staff) that the viewing community does not contribute to conservation.
 - d. Consider how to use public reporting of certain wildlife species (through photos especially) as a good way to begin conversations with viewers (like the Flora and Fauna part of the Run for the Wild event).

Objective 3: Increase monetary contributions of wildlife viewers to support DWR's work with wildlife and habitat conservation.

1. **Increase training and awareness of the ways in which wildlife viewers financially support DWR.**
 - a. Increase internal training on the funding mechanisms through which viewers support DWR, including HB38 funds, Virginia Wildlife license plates, the Nongame Fund, the Access Permit, Restore the Wild, and even hunting and fishing licenses.
 - b. Communicate internally and externally about the role that wildlife viewers play in financially supporting the DWR (e.g., sharing the results of the Wildlife Viewer survey conducted by Virginia Tech).

2. Streamline and expand external promotion of existing funding mechanisms through which wildlife viewers can and already do support DWR.

- a. Be more transparent about agency funding sources and allocation of funding resources by reviving a previously existing webpage on funding.
- b. Communicate about current funding mechanisms that viewers can and already participate in to support the agency (e.g., communicating the role of HB 38 funds to birders and viewers).
- c. Promote ways in which constituents can financially support DWR conservation efforts in all DWR communications (i.e., 'How You Can Help').
- d. Promote purchase of a Virginia Wildlife license plate as a mechanism for contributing to the agency and wildlife conservation.
- e. Streamline and expand promotion of Restore the Wild memberships to communicate the value of this program for wildlife viewers.
- f. Clarify the purpose and goals of the Restore the Wild Program in order to refine the program's target communities and desired outcomes.
- g. Shift dialogue around Restore the Wild memberships from a focus on generating more money for the agency to highlighting the habitat and wildlife services provided by the agency for diverse constituencies, and provide a variety of mechanisms through which constituents can support DWR, from volunteering to donating.
- h. Develop a set of standardized materials (e.g., logos, presentation slides, hand outs) to advertise the Restore the Wild program by the agency and partner organizations.
- i. Provide clear information about the Restore the Wild membership on DWR's website and as a regular part of DWR social media outreach.
- j. Work to further push advertisement and communication of the Restore the Wild Membership to broader, non-traditional audiences (e.g., through concert venues, breweries, etc.).
- k. Provide opportunities for the public to choose and/or provide artwork for the focal species used for each year's Restore the Wild campaign. Ensure that the focal species are diverse and rotating, and include species that generally receive less attention.
- l. Consider how to capitalize on what has been created with Restore the Wild to also increase monies for the separate Nongame Fund (funds SGCN research projects and wildlife viewing projects) in order to streamline the call to action for the public.
- m. Consider a rebranding of the Nongame Fund (new name, updated graphics, improved webpage) and put some marketing behind it, as has been done with Restore the Wild. Reintroduce what it is to wildlife viewers, its purpose, and its relevance to wildlife viewers.

3. Implement DWR-sponsored events in which registration fees support wildlife or habitat conservation.

- a. Implement more DWR-sponsored events in which registration fees support habitat projects or Restore the Wild (such as Run for the Wild).

4. Explore opportunities to work with corporate or retail partners to generate funding for wildlife conservation and viewing-related programming.

- a. Consider ways to partner with industry to garner funding for wildlife conservation and viewing-related programming.

Appendix C: Public Input on the Draft Wildlife Viewing Plan

From February 1, 2021 through March 3, 2021, researchers at Virginia Tech worked with DWR staff to collect broad public input on the draft Wildlife Viewing Plan to ensure that the plan reflects the values and interests of people throughout the Commonwealth. Public input was collected through a public input survey hosted by Virginia Tech. The survey platform ensured that respondents were 18 years of age or older; asked respondents to indicate whether or not they were Virginia residents, and whether or not they identify as a wildlife viewer, hunter, angler, sport shooter, and/or boater; and provided an open text box for entry of comments on the plan. An announcement of the public input period was posted on the DWR's website, shared through multiple DWR communications channels, forwarded to the contacts of SAC and TAC members, and sent directly to all individuals who previously participated in the Wildlife Recreation Survey. In the 30-day public input period, a total of 357 comments were submitted through the online survey. Of the individuals who commented, 98% were Virginia residents and 95% identified as wildlife viewers. Over 68% of respondents identified as a wildlife viewer in addition to at least one other kind of wildlife recreationist (hunter, angler, sport shooter, and/or boater).

The Virginia Tech team read and organized all submitted comments according to the section of the plan to which they applied (the overall plan, Goal 1, Goal 2, Goal 3, Goal 4, or plan implementation) and removed any identifying information. Qualitative data analysis software (Dedoose, version 8.3.47b) was used by the team to assign *codes* - short phrases that summarize the meaning of a longer piece of text - to all comments. Many comments were multifaceted and were thus assigned multiple codes, resulting in a total of 852 coded comment excerpts. Codes generally reflected 1) support or 2) concern about the components of the Wildlife Viewing Plan, or 3) suggested approaches for achieving the goals and objectives of the plan. A summary of all comments expressing support or concern about the plan was shared with the SAC and TAC in a combined meeting in March 2021 for discussion of how the plan should be adjusted in response to comments. All suggested approaches for achieving plan objectives were shared with a small group of TAC members, who cross-walked these suggestions with strategies and tactics that were already in the plan and discussed additions or modifications that should be made in light of public comments.

This appendix contains a summary of the public comments received on the draft Wildlife Viewing Plan. The following table shows the themes (in most cases organized by support, concerns, and suggested approaches) that emerged from qualitative coding of all public comments, along with an indication of the number of comments to which that code was applied. Under each of those broad themes, more specific subthemes are listed, paired with a response from the SAC and TAC that includes any adjustments that were made to the plan in light of the comments.

Themes from public comments on the draft Wildlife Viewing Plan	Response to concerns and suggested additions
Overall Plan	
Specific support for the Wildlife Viewing Plan (n=172)	
Concerns about the overall Wildlife Viewing Plan (n=28)	
The plan may detract from the services provided by the DWR to hunters and anglers	Language was added to the Wildlife Viewing and State Fish and Wildlife Agencies section of Part III to explain that this plan, while it focuses on supporting wildlife viewing activities, does not detract from current agency support of other activities, including hunting, fishing, and boating. As emphasized as a priority in the <i>Relevancy Roadmap</i> , agencies must continue to serve their long-standing supporters and constituents, while also broadening their focus to include the growing number of people who engage with wildlife in other ways. Additionally, the Wildlife Recreation Survey conducted to inform this plan makes it clear that there is a great deal of overlap between the hunting, angling, and wildlife viewing communities, with many individuals participating in multiple forms of wildlife recreation. Many of the goals, objectives, and strategies outlined in this plan will broadly bolster opportunities for wildlife recreation and conservation in Virginia and benefit everyone with an interest in wildlife.
The plan is very long, which makes it difficult to read in its entirety	The Wildlife Viewing Plan contains a 3-page Executive Summary, which provides a short overview of each of the components of the full plan document. The agency is also considering options for creating a brief communications document that can be used to share the key components of the plan.
Inclusion of feeding wildlife in the definition of wildlife viewing may suggest that the DWR supports feeding wild animals	Content was added to the section on Defining Wildlife Viewing under Part III to clarify that feeding wildlife is included as a wildlife viewing activity under this plan in order to be consistent with the National Survey and to capture the common practice of feeding wild birds. This section now also explains that the DWR does not encourage feeding wildlife at any time of year, that it is illegal to feed wildlife under certain conditions, and that improving habitat is an alternative way to support wildlife populations.
Use of the term “nongame wildlife” suggests that wildlife viewers are only interested in species that are neither hunted nor fished.	The “nongame” term was removed throughout the plan, where possible, to clarify the importance of all wildlife for wildlife viewing activities. It was retained in sections of the plan that 1) specifically describe the history of the DWR’s research, conservation, and management of nongame species, which began after the agency’s work with game species, or 2) when referring to the DWR’s Nongame Program.

The plan contains too little coverage of the importance of aquatic wildlife and opportunities for viewing these species in Virginia	Additional content on conservation and recreation related to aquatic wildlife was added to: 1) the Wildlife Viewing in Virginia section of Part III, to generally describe the aquatic viewing opportunities available in the state; 2) the Wildlife Research and Conservation section of Part III to describe Musselrama, a DWR-led survey of mussels in the Upper Tennessee River Basin; 3) the Nature Tourism section of Part III to describe the water access points of the VBWT and related viewing opportunities on blueways in the state, and 4) the potential tactics in Appendix B under Goal 1, Objective 5, Strategy 2.
Suggested additions to the plan (n=16)	
The plan could include other stakeholders, such as foragers, native plant enthusiasts, and those involved in wildlife rehabilitation	The definition of wildlife viewing previously used in the plan was edited to include visiting parks and natural areas because of wildlife and maintaining plantings and natural areas for the benefit of wildlife. This change better reflects the definition of wildlife watching used by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and also clarifies the importance of native plants and the relevance of wildlife viewing to those who visit natural areas. Additionally, a sentence was added to p.11 that emphasizes the potential value of this plan for all who enjoy Virginia's wildlife and natural areas managed by the DWR. Other additions to the stakeholders considered in this plan would expand the plan beyond its scope.
The plan could include additional background on the history of conservation in the state and some of the DWR's early citizen science programs	Inclusion of detailed conservation history is outside of the scope of this plan. A section on "Additional citizen science surveys" was added to the Citizen Science section of Part III to describe the Virginia Bowhunter Survey, Rural Mail Carrier Route, Quail Cooperator survey, Spring Turkey Survey, and the Deer Management Assistance Program.
The plan should describe the impact of climate change and development on wildlife in the Commonwealth	More detailed description of individual threats to wildlife populations are out of the scope of this plan. However, as stated in Part I of the plan, it is expected that implementation of the plan will be adjusted over time based on changing social and environmental conditions.
Include additional information about the role of other state and federal agencies that support wildlife conservation and recreation in Virginia	The Wildlife Viewing Plan recognizes the need for additional information about the role of the DWR in wildlife conservation and recreation, and it is clear that there is a lack of clarity about how that role differs from and complements the roles of other agencies. A paragraph was added to the About the Virginia DWR section of Part I to describe the agency's role in greater detail. Clarifying the agency's role is also central to Goal 4, Objective 1, but it is outside of the scope of this plan to catalogue the roles of other state and federal natural resource agencies.

Plan Implementation	
Concerns about plan implementation (n=16)	
Implementation will need to be monitored and progress assessed through specific and measurable outputs and outcomes	Part IV of the plan includes a possible framework for plan evaluation, but clarifies that agency staff will need to refine an approach to evaluation for each objective and develop processes for tracking outputs and measuring outcomes as they embark on plan implementation. The plan suggests DWR Employee Work Profiles as one mechanism for facilitating annual tracking of inputs, outputs, and outcomes, and identifies data sources that can be used to measure progress against baselines relevant to each objective.
Implementation will require engaging all agency staff and hiring new staff who value wildlife viewing	Part IV of the plan notes that while the plan was developed cognizant of current staffing and funding conditions within the DWR, its successful implementation will require ongoing assessment of staff capacity, and full implementation of the plan will likely require additional human and financial resources. Goal 4, Objective 2, Strategy 1 emphasizes the importance of ensuring that DWR staff recognize the importance of wildlife viewing to both the agency and the Commonwealth.
Implementation of the plan and the prioritization of strategies and tactics will need to be adjusted over time to achieve plan goals	In Part I, the section on Interim Changes to the Plan clarifies that while the plan was developed to provide guidance that would be relevant for the next 10 years, the plan is intended to be a dynamic and flexible tool which remains responsive to changing social, environmental, technical, and administrative conditions. This section explains that the plan will be updated based on ongoing assessment of progress towards plan goals, and outlines the processes that will be used to make changes to plan goals, objectives, and strategies.
The plan lacks a clear timeline for implementation	The timeline for the overall plan is 10 years, from 2021 to 2031. More specific timelines for implementing plan strategies and potential tactics and achieving plan objectives will be developed by the DWR staff responsible for plan implementation.
Goal 1	
Specific support for Goal 1 (n=5)	
Concerns about Goal 1 (n=6)	

Goal 1 unnecessarily narrows the agency's focus to certain groups; the plan should focus on increasing opportunities for wildlife viewing for everyone	The Values Statement of the Wildlife Viewing Plan states that high-quality wildlife viewing experiences should be accessible and promoted to all people in the Commonwealth, and Goal 1 aims to connect diverse segments of the public to wildlife and wildlife viewing in Virginia. The objectives under Goal 1 draw attention to a variety of groups that warrant specific efforts from the DWR to increase their access to and awareness of wildlife viewing opportunities, due to their current underrepresentation or limited experience in wildlife viewing, as well as their geographic location and age.
Suggested approaches for engaging underrepresented groups in wildlife viewing (n=9)	
Develop programs to introduce uninterested or unaware people to wildlife viewing	Many of the strategies and tactics included in the Wildlife Viewing Plan under Goal 1 focus on sharing wildlife viewing opportunities with groups and individuals who are not currently participating in wildlife viewing. Providing programs and resources that have the potential to recruit new recreationists is also a substantial focus of the agency's R3 Plan.
Eliminate access fees for WMAs to address financial barriers to access for underrepresented groups	Because DWR lands are not purchased with or supported by general state tax dollars, maintenance of these properties is achieved through funds raised through access fees. However, one of the potential tactics in Appendix B under Goal 1, Objective 1, Strategy 3 is to promote access to DWR areas for wildlife or recreation organizations in order to promote participation and use among underrepresented groups, including through fee waivers.
Partner with VDOE and VHDA and other relevant agencies to reach urban and low-income populations	A potential tactic was added to Appendix B under Goal 1, Objective 1, Strategy 2 to include exploring partnership opportunities with other Virginia agencies, such as Virginia Housing and Virginia Department of Social Services, in order to reach underrepresented groups. The existing partnership between the DWR and Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) through the Project WILD Coordinator was added to the Wildlife and Habitat Education section of Part III.
Address transportation as a barrier to access for low income and urban residents	The summaries for Objective 1 and 3 under Goal 1 note the importance of transportation as a potential barrier to wildlife viewing among underrepresented groups and youth. Additions were made to a potential tactic in Appendix B under Goal 2, Objective 2, Strategy 1 to specifically include promotion of wildlife viewing locations in or near urban areas that are easily accessible using public transportation.

Fund a grant program that supports outreach specific to underrepresented communities	Language was added to the Wildlife and Habitat Education section of Part IV to clarify that the Virginia Wildlife Grant Program prioritizes grants for projects that benefit underrepresented groups in wildlife and outdoor recreation.
Ensure that educators who interface with the public represent the communities they are working in	Education and outreach staff were added to potential tactic c. under Goal 1, Objective 1, Strategy 4, which focuses on recruiting qualified candidates from underrepresented groups in an effort to increase diversity among DWR staff. Recruitment and training are also being addressed in the agency's Diversity and Inclusion Plan.
Direct more resources toward gaining access and creating opportunities for this group than into trying to develop more programs, which already exist through numerous NGOs	Many of the strategies and potential tactics included in the Wildlife Viewing Plan emphasize partnering with other organizations to support and promote existing programs. Due to limitations in DWR staff capacity and funding, these partnerships provide opportunities to pool resources and add value to existing opportunities for wildlife viewing in the state.
Suggested approaches for engaging urban populations (n=5)	
Support the establishment of bird and pollinator habitat in urban areas	A potential tactic was added to Appendix B under Goal 1, Objective 2, Strategy 2 focused on developing programs or resources that help urban communities establish pollinator gardens and support native habitats.
Take an active role in coordinating responses to nuisance animal control and injured wildlife	While the DWR provides technical assistance related to human-wildlife conflict and hosts a Wildlife Conflict Helpline, addressing nuisance animal control and injured wildlife are outside of the scope of this Wildlife Viewing Plan.
Expand wildlife and environmental education programs, particularly in urban/suburban areas	Developing and promoting programs and activities that support wildlife viewing in urban areas are included in the Wildlife Viewing Plan under Goal 1, Objective 2. Related potential tactics, which focus on increasing outreach to educators in urban areas and coordinating events and partnerships in urban areas, are included in Appendix B.
Suggested approaches for engaging youth and families (n=13)	
Support experiential educational experiences for youth and adults	Language was added to Goal 1, Objective 3, Strategy 2 to emphasize the importance of experiential learning activities, particularly for youth and families.
Use best practices in educational programs to generate enduring interest in wildlife and wildlife viewing	A potential tactic was added under Goal 1, Objective 4, Strategy 1 to provide training for DWR volunteers on how to follow best practices in education and interpretation to engage the public in wildlife viewing opportunities.

Increase access to wildlife viewing equipment and supplies	A number of potential tactics for increasing access to wildlife viewing equipment and supplies are included in Appendix B under Goal 1, Objective 3, Strategy 2. These tactics focus on providing access to equipment for youth, but, as noted in the plan, these programs could also be designed to increase access for other groups, including beginning viewers.
Work with schools to implement wildlife curriculum and build interest in wildlife viewing	Information was added to the Wildlife and Habitat Education section of Part III to describe the role that the DWR's Project WILD Coordinator plays on the Virginia Department of Education Standards of Learning (SOLs) committee. The following potential tactic was added to Appendix B: <i>Continue to leverage the role of the agency on the Virginia Department of Education's Standards of Learning Committee to ensure content about wildlife and viewing are included in state standards, as conservation currently is, at all grade levels.</i>
Make citizen science and wildlife viewing programs more fun for kids, with associated merchandise and prizes	A number of potential tactics under Goal 1, Objective 3 aim to create or support engaging programs that involve youth and their families in wildlife viewing and conservation. Programs that serve youth were specifically added to Goal 1, Objective 3, Strategy 2 to clarify the role that organizations such as Scouts, YMCAs, 4H, and Boys and Girls Clubs of America can play in connecting youth to fun experiences related to wildlife viewing and outdoor recreation.
Leverage social media to gain interest from a younger generation	Leveraging social media platforms and innovative technological tools for reaching and engaging younger people was added as a potential tactic to Appendix B under Goal 1, Objective 3, Strategy 1.
Build on Scouting programs, which have offered structured nature experiences for youth	Programs that serve youth were added to Goal 1, Objective 3, Strategy 2 to clarify the role that organizations such as Scouts can play in engaging youth in experiential learning activities and experiences related to wildlife viewing and outdoor recreation.
Suggested approaches for engaging new viewers (n=3)	
Encourage beginners to start with a group outing with an experienced guide or an established club	Goal 1, Objective 4, Strategy 3 emphasizes the importance of connecting new wildlife viewers to viewing opportunities and social support available through established viewing organizations. A related tactic in Appendix B specifically includes directing people to birding and viewing clubs in Virginia through the DWR website.

Ensure that new viewers are educated on matters of etiquette and safety while in the field, especially when viewing on public lands	Goal 1, Objective 4, Strategy 1 focuses on creating introductory resources, activities, and programs to help new and inexperienced wildlife viewers get started. Additions were made to a tactic under this strategy in Appendix B to include providing information on how beginning viewers can have a safe and satisfying experience, in addition to other introductory information on wildlife viewing.
Suggested approaches for raising awareness of wildlife viewing among other outdoor recreationists (n=2)	
Develop guides for recreationists engaged in other outdoor activities, such as hiking, golfing, and historic tourism	A potential tactic on providing guides and other information about wildlife viewing to outdoor recreationists is included in Appendix B under Goal 1, Objective 5, Strategy 2. A potential tactic was added under the same strategy to work with historic sites and battlefields that are VBWT sites to develop materials about wildlife viewing for their visitors.
Goal 2	
Specific support for Goal 2 (n=10)	
Concerns about Goal 2 (n=41)	
Hunter and viewer usage of DWR properties, particularly WMAs, will need to be balanced	Goal 2, Objective 1, Strategy 2 and Strategy 3 focus on clarifying the purpose of agency properties, the ability of these lands and waters to support multiple forms of wildlife recreation, and how recreationists can have a safe and satisfying experience, given hunter use of these locations. Potential tactics under Strategy 2 in Appendix B include 1) Consider ways to highlight the ability of WMAs to support both hunting and viewing activities, especially through infrastructure and information about usage; 2) Address perceived safety issues and interference associated with a multi-use approach to recreation on WMAs; and 3) Encourage use of WMAs by viewers on Sundays, when hunting (mostly) does not occur.
There is a need for more or different wildlife and habitat management on agency lands	WMAs are individually managed according to conservation and management goals that are set when each new WMA is established. Management plans for individual WMAs are updated over time based on conservation needs and agency priorities. Recognizing the role of wildlife and habitat management in viewing opportunities, Goal 1, Objective 1, Strategy 1 is to continue to conduct holistic habitat management on DWR properties that includes all wildlife and is consistent with the DWR Wildlife Action Plan. It is out of the scope of this Wildlife Viewing Plan to prescribe specific management actions on DWR's properties.

Increased usage will result in increased pressure on viewing locations and potential human impacts on wildlife	As stated in the Wildlife Viewing Plan, the DWR and other fish and wildlife agencies face sometimes competing directives to both connect people to wildlife and conserve natural resources in light of human impacts on species and habitats. Building on the notion that Virginia's wildlife resources are a public trust that should be stewarded by all current and future residents of the Commonwealth, the Values Statement for the Wildlife Viewing Plan holds that viewing opportunities should support, and not undermine, the health of wildlife and their habitats, and that wildlife viewers should engage with wildlife responsibly, ethically, and respectfully, to ensure the sustainability of wildlife populations, habitats, and viewing opportunities. These values provide guidance on the principles and priorities that should orient all of the DWR's efforts related to wildlife viewing under the Wildlife Viewing Plan. Many tactics included in Appendix B identify mechanisms through which the agency can foster wildlife viewing as a means to support wildlife conservation. On WMAs in particular, the DWR's primary management objective is to conserve and manage high-quality wildlife habitats that support healthy and diverse populations of Virginia's native wildlife. All uses, including hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and other human activities, are secondary and must be compatible with this primary goal.
Access fees for DWR lands and waters may limit accessibility for the public	Because DWR lands are not purchased with or supported by general state tax dollars, maintenance of these properties is achieved through funds raised through access fees. To address potential barriers to access among some segments of the public, one of the potential tactics in Appendix B under Goal 1, Objective 1, Strategy 3 is to promote access to DWR areas for wildlife or recreation organizations in order to promote participation and use among underrepresented groups, including through fee waivers.
Suggested approaches for increasing use of agency lands and waters for wildlife viewing (n=98)	
Increase welcoming signage on-site at WMAs that explains access requirements and payment options	A potential tactic in Appendix B under Goal 1, Objective 1, Strategy 4 includes providing more information on-site at public lands about license and fee requirements, including signs detailing options for paying via kiosks, online, or through the app. An additional potential tactic was added under Strategy 3 to develop and continually publicize multimedia resources that provide a general overview of WMAs, including how to have a safe and satisfying experience, required access fees, and payment options.

<p>Increase on-site signage about management activities on DWR lands and waters</p>	<p>Potential tactics listed in Appendix B under Goal 1, Objective 1, Strategy 3 and Strategy 4 include developing online resources and on-site signage that provide clarity about when various management activities are occurring on individual WMAs and interpretive materials to explain the importance of management actions for wildlife.</p>
<p>Increase on-site and online information about WMA usage for various recreation activities to prevent conflict between viewers and hunters</p>	<p>Goal 2, Objective 1, Strategy 2 and Strategy 3 focus on clarifying the purpose of agency properties, the ability of these lands and waters to support multiple forms of wildlife recreation, and how recreationists can have a safe and satisfying experience, given hunter use of these locations. Potential tactics under Strategy 2 in Appendix B include 1) Consider ways to highlight the ability of WMAs to support both hunting and viewing activities, especially through infrastructure and information about usage; 2) Address perceived safety issues and interference associated with a multi-use approach to recreation on WMAs; and 3) Encourage use of WMAs by viewers on Sundays, when hunting (mostly) does not occur. A tactic under Strategy 3 includes developing and publicizing online resources that provide clarity about when various recreation activities are happening on WMAs, since these activities vary across WMAs, counties, and months. An additional tactic was added under Strategy 3 to develop and publicize multimedia resources that provide a general overview of WMAs, including how to have a safe and satisfying experience.</p>
<p>Increase public awareness of locations for wildlife viewing</p>	<p>Many of the tactics under the strategies for Goal 1, Objective 1 and Objective 2 focus on increasing awareness among wildlife viewers of the opportunities available on agency lands and waters and other locations on the VBWT for viewing wildlife. In particular, one of the tactics under Objective 1, Strategy 2 is to work on messaging in order to raise the profile of WMAs among wildlife viewers and clarify their unique mission and management, while eight potential tactics under Objective 2, Strategy 1 provide mechanisms for expanding promotion of the VBWT to improve awareness and understanding of the VBWT among wildlife viewers.</p>
<p>Install blinds, platforms, and boardwalks for wildlife observation and photography in select locations on WMAs and other public locations</p>	<p>The following strategy and related tactics were added to Goal 1, Objective 1: Strategy 5: Continue to explore opportunities to provide wildlife viewing amenities on DWR lands and waters on a site-by-site basis, with tactics including: a. Assess, account for, and aim to avoid impacts to wildlife and habitats from new infrastructure on DWR lands and waters, and b. Strategically install viewing amenities based on the level and nature of property use and as staff and budgets allow.</p>

Develop, maintain, and promote barrier-free, accessible trails and access areas for people with physical disabilities	The plan includes a potential tactic in Appendix B under Goal 2, Objective 2, Strategy 4 to increase the number of barrier-free and ADA-compliant facilities on DWR properties, where financially feasible. Additionally, Goal 2, Objective 2, Strategy 5 was expanded to specifically include wider promotion of accessible VBWT sites. An associated potential tactic was added to Appendix B to add VBWT sites to the map on Birdability.org in order to increase access to information about the accessibility of VBWT sites.
Consider impacts to wildlife and habitats before installing facilities or structures on DWR lands and waters	A new strategy and potential tactic were added to the Wildlife Viewing Plan under Goal 1, Objective 1 related to wildlife viewing amenities installed on DWR properties. A potential tactic under that strategy emphasizes that the agency should assess, account for, and aim to avoid impacts to wildlife and habitats from new infrastructure on DWR lands and waters. Additionally, WMAs are managed with the primary purpose to conserve and manage high-quality wildlife habitats that support healthy and diverse populations of Virginia's native wildlife; land modifications and management actions must support that goal.
Create more access points and locations for water access through boat ramps or canoe/kayak launch sites	Additional description of water access sites currently included in the VBWT was added to the Nature Tourism section of Part III. While the VBWT contains an assortment of publicly accessible water access points that provide easy access to blueways and aquatic viewing opportunities across the state, the Wildlife Recreation Survey indicated limited public awareness of VBWT site locations. Goal 2, Objective 2, Strategy 1 thus focuses on expanding promotion of the VBWT to improve awareness and understanding of the VBWT among wildlife viewers. A potential tactic under this strategy is to improve online information to address widespread lack of understanding about what VBWT sites are, where they are located, what can be expected on the sites, and the fact that they encompass a diverse array of both public and private lands, managed by diverse entities. This includes exploring options for additional filters that will allow users to identify VBWT sites with water access.
Provide options to pay on the spot for WMA access	Due to the management structure of WMAs, it is not possible to have staff on-site at all times to collect on-site cash payments. However, WMA visitors can currently pay on-site for WMA access through the DWR website or app. The plan includes potential tactics focused on increasing on-site information about payment options.

Address parking limitations and signage on WMAs	Potential tactics in Appendix B under Goal 2, Objective 1, Strategy 4 relate to ensuring that on-site signage on WMAs and other agency properties is effective, with accurate, up-to-date information about access and clearly marked entry points and parking areas. In some cases, parking areas are limited at WMAs in order to help manage levels of use to prevent negative impacts on wildlife or habitats.
Suggested approaches for increasing use of VBWT sites for wildlife viewing (n=11)	
Produce updated and higher-resolution versions of VBWT trail guides that can be printed for use in locations without web access or by people without access to technology in the field	Agency staff have been working to update VBWT maps and improve their utility; about half of the VBWT loops now have updated maps. In support of these efforts, Goal 2, Objective 2, Strategy 1 focuses on improving the information available online about the VBWT to increase awareness and understanding of the trail among wildlife viewers, including where VBWT sites are located.
Improve access to information about available amenities and the physical accessibility of VBWT sites	Goal 2, Objective 2, Strategy 4 aims to increase the accessibility of VBWT sites, including DWR properties, for viewers with physical disabilities. A tactic under this strategy specifically focuses on improving the accessibility of information about the availability and locations of barrier-free and accessible trails at WMAs, most of which are also VBWT sites. An additional tactic was included to add VBWT sites to the map on Birdability.org in order to increase access to information about the accessibility of VBWT sites.
Link the VBWT sites to eBird hotspot data and encourage visitors to use eBird	VBWT sites, including the DWR's WMAs, are currently designated as eBird hotspots. These public birding locations allow birders to associate their observations with the hotspot, generating aggregated results on bird diversity in that location. VBWT Adopt-a-Trail volunteers also record their observations of birds and wildlife into the Wildlife Mapping project on iNaturalist and eBird. Improving the visibility of eBird hotspot information on the VBWT website is included under a broader potential tactic for Goal 2, Objective 2, Strategy 1 related to improving online information about VBWT sites. Each VBWT site webpage currently links to an eBird bar chart (when available) that displays a species list and what months the species has been observed at the site. Additionally, about half of the VBWT site webpages contain a feed of recent bird species observed at the site based on eBird data. Eventually, this feed will be implemented across all VBWT site webpages.
Leverage grants to increase marketing and advertising of VBWT sites	Goal 2, Objective 2, Strategy 1 focuses on expanding promotion of the VBWT, with associated potential tactics focusing on working with partners to increase marketing and advertising related to these sites.

Use promotions and games to encourage visits to VBWT sites	One potential tactic in Appendix B under Goal 2, Objective 2, Strategy 2 is to develop programs that incentivize or reward wildlife viewing on public lands (for example, visiting VBWT sites or loops within the state).
Suggested approaches for increasing access to viewing opportunities close to home (n=20)	
Install and promote wildlife and natural area cameras	Potential tactics in Appendix B under Goal 2, Objective 3, Strategy 2 include using web-based platforms to host virtual wildlife viewing programming for people at home and communicating to broader audiences about DWR's existing wildlife cameras.
Work with stakeholders such as private landowners, Cooperative Extension/4-H, Farm Bureau, and Virginia Working Landscapes to include content on working lands in educational and outreach materials	A new strategy focused on private lands was added to the plan under Goal 2, Objective 3. This suggestion was added as a potential tactic to Appendix B under this new strategy.
Work with private landowners to create or encourage access to their properties for public wildlife viewing	A new strategy focused on private lands was added to the plan under Goal 2, Objective 3. This suggestion was added as a potential tactic to Appendix B under this new strategy.
Provide homeowners and landowners with information about how to protect wildlife habitats on their properties	Potential tactics in Appendix B under Goal 2, Objective 3, Strategy 1 include a variety of ways in which the agency can work to provide homeowners and landowners with information about establishing and protecting wildlife habitat on their properties.
Leverage relationships with VDCR and Forestry to include watchable wildlife in ongoing landowner conservation programs	A new strategy focused on private lands was added to the plan under Goal 2, Objective 3. This suggestion was added as a potential tactic to Appendix B under this new strategy.
Develop incentives to encourage HOAs to mitigate habitat loss in residential common areas	An adaptation of this suggestion was added as a potential tactic to Appendix B under Goal 2, Objective 3, Strategy 1.
Goal 3	
Specific support for Goal 3 (n=3)	
Suggested approaches for connecting viewers to volunteer opportunities (n=6)	
Involve volunteer citizens in results-focused activities with clear value	Goal 3, Objective 1, Strategy 3 emphasizes the importance of engaging citizen science volunteers in projects that are aligned with DWR's management and conservation goals, and establishing mechanisms for incorporating data generated by citizen scientists in DWR decision-making processes.

Ensure that results from citizen science projects are shared with volunteers	A potential tactic in Appendix B under Goal 3, Objective 2, Strategy 5 is to ensure that data collected through citizen science programs are used and shared and their application is communicated to volunteers.
Ensure that volunteer projects are welcoming and rewarding for people of all experience levels	Goal 3, Objective 1, Strategy 5 focuses broadly on the implementation of best practices across volunteer programs to promote volunteer satisfaction and retention. These best practices include ensuring that volunteer opportunities are welcoming and well-suited to the skills of volunteers. An additional potential tactic was added under Strategy 5 to emphasize the importance of training DWR staff who coordinate volunteer programs in how to make these experiences positive and rewarding for volunteers.
Provide clarity on how to participate in volunteer opportunities	Reflecting an internal need to understand the range of volunteer opportunities currently available through the DWR, a potential tactic was added under Goal 3, Objective 1, Strategy 5 to catalog existing DWR volunteer programs. Strategy 1 under Goal 3, Objective 1 is to develop resources that communicate the avenues for wildlife viewers to engage in volunteer conservation activities, such as citizen science, habitat stewardship, outreach, and advocacy. A tactic under this strategy suggests that these resources and guidance on how to get involved should be available for both adults and youth.
Provide volunteers on citizen science projects with reliable and alternative mechanisms for submitting data	Providing volunteers with reliable mechanisms for submitting data is one component of implementing best practices across volunteer programs to promote volunteer satisfaction and retention (Goal 3, Objective 2, Strategy 5). The coordinators of volunteer programs should ensure that any apps used for data collection are field-tested prior to their deployment with volunteers, and that volunteers are comfortable with the data collection methods to be used in a project.
Recognize the contributions of volunteers	Recognizing the contributions of volunteers is an important aspect of implementing best practices across volunteer programs to promote volunteer satisfaction and retention (Goal 3, Objective 1, Strategy 5). Additionally, Goal 4, Objective 2, Strategy 7 specifically focuses on fostering ongoing engagement with agency volunteers and recognition of their contributions.
Suggested approaches for fostering a culture of responsible wildlife viewing (n=13)	
Emphasize the importance of preventing and cleaning up litter and pollution for wildlife	Though not listed explicitly, litter and pollution prevention or remediation are considered forms of stewardship in this plan and are thus included in the strategies under Goal 3, Objective 2. Other parts of the plan (e.g., Goal 2, Objective 2, Strategy 4)

	include potential tactics focused on the management of waste on agency lands.
Emphasize the importance of not disturbing wildlife during viewing activities	Avoiding disturbance to wildlife is an important component of responsible wildlife viewing and is thus included in the strategies under Goal 3, Objective 2. A potential tactic under Strategy 2 specifically aims to promote a culture of responsible wildlife viewing (stewardship, ethics, and safety) among wildlife viewers through education, including promoting information available on the agency website related to handling and impacting wildlife on public lands.
Ensure that wildlife viewers are equipped with information and skills necessary to have a safe experience	The strategies and potential tactics under Goal 3, Objective 2 focus on increasing communications from the DWR and partner organizations that help people engage in wildlife viewing activities responsibly, including components of stewardship, ethics, and safety. Additionally, tactics under Goal 2, Objective 1 and Goal 1, Objective 4 include providing viewers with the information they need about DWR lands to have a safe and satisfying experience.
Prioritize wildlife and habitat conservation over access for wildlife viewing	As stated in the Wildlife Viewing Plan, the DWR and other fish and wildlife agencies face sometimes competing directives to both connect people to wildlife and conserve natural resources in light of human impacts on species and habitats. Building on the notion that Virginia's wildlife resources are a public trust that should be stewarded by all current and future residents of the Commonwealth, the Values Statement for the Wildlife Viewing Plan holds that viewing opportunities should support, and not undermine, the health of wildlife and their habitats, and that wildlife viewers should engage with wildlife responsibly, ethically, and respectfully, to ensure the sustainability of wildlife populations, habitats, and viewing opportunities. These values provide guidance on the principles and priorities that should orient all of the DWR's efforts related to wildlife viewing under the Wildlife Viewing Plan. Many tactics included in Appendix B identify mechanisms through which the agency can foster wildlife viewing as a means to support wildlife conservation. On WMAs in particular, the DWR's primary management objective is to conserve and manage high-quality wildlife habitats that support healthy and diverse populations of Virginia's native wildlife. All uses, including hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and other human activities, are secondary and must be compatible with this primary goal.
Goal 4	
Specific support for Goal 4 (n=6)	

Concerns about Goal 4 (n=9)	
The appropriate mechanisms for connecting wildlife viewers to DWR funding streams are unclear	As described in the Financial Support section of Part III, the Restore the Wild membership offered by the DWR was designed to provide wildlife viewers with an opportunity to contribute to the DWR's habitat conservation work. Membership fees directly fund habitat conservation projects and provide members with access to agency lands and waters. Other mechanisms for contributing to the agency, such as purchasing a conservation license plate, are also described in the Financial Support section. Additionally, links have been added to homepage of the DWR website with information on how people can contribute to, volunteer with, or otherwise partner with the agency.
The agency needs to build relationships with viewers, beyond approaching them as a new source of funding	Strategies and tactics under Goal 4, Objective 2 focus on mechanisms through which the DWR might cultivate substantive relationships with wildlife viewers, engaging with this constituency as true stakeholders. Related strategies include increasing internal recognition of the importance of wildlife viewing to the work of the DWR; establishing avenues for wildlife viewers to provide feedback to the agency; initiating engagement with viewing organizations; and recognizing and communicating about viewer contributions to the agency. Additionally, a new strategy and associated tactics were added under this objective that focuses on ways in which the DWR can proactively seek opportunities for engagement with wildlife viewing-focused organizations and groups to build stronger relationships between wildlife viewers and the agency.
Suggested approaches for increasing awareness of the DWR's mission (n=5)	
Increase awareness of DWR's work through proactive and sustained engagement with the public	Goal 4, Objective 1, Strategy 1 and Strategy 2 focus on increasing awareness of the scope of DWR's mission and its relevance to wildlife viewing through public communications and participation in public events
Consider use of Public Service Announcements as a mechanism for sharing information about the DWR with the public	Goal 4, Objective 1, Strategy 1 focuses on developing a communication strategy to share the DWR mission, the role of DWR in conservation and outdoor recreation, and the agency's commitment to diverse constituencies, including wildlife viewers. A tactic was added under this strategy to include considering PSAs as a component of that communications strategy.
Suggested approaches for cultivating relationships with wildlife viewers (n=6)	

Work with partner organizations to connect wildlife viewers to meaningful volunteer opportunities	Goal 3, Objective 1, Strategy 4 is to work with partner organizations to create and coordinate volunteer opportunities for wildlife viewers and to recruit volunteers.
Work proactively with partners across federal, regional, state, and local levels	A new strategy was added under Goal 4 that encourages the DWR to seek opportunities for engagement with wildlife viewing-focused organizations and groups to build stronger relationships between wildlife viewers and the agency.
Consider how the agency can support legislation that applies to all wildlife, in addition to regular hunting and fishing regulations	The DWR is responsible for setting a number of regulations that apply to hunting and fishing at the state level, such as harvest limits and season lengths. In contrast, most of the regulations that apply broadly to wildlife conservation are set at the federal level and implemented by the DWR. The Endangered Species Act and Virginia's Wildlife Action Plan are updated regularly and provide mechanisms through which wildlife viewers and others can provide input into the policies and planning documents that guide the DWR's conservation work. Potential tactics in Appendix B under Goal 4, Objective 1, Strategy 1 and Goal 4, Objective 2, Strategy 2 were adjusted to emphasize the role of the state Wildlife Action Plan in guiding conservation in Virginia and the ability of wildlife viewers to provide feedback on this document when it is updated.
Promote positive encounters between wildlife viewers and diverse agency staff	A new strategy was added under Goal 4 that encourages the DWR to seek opportunities for engagement with wildlife viewing-focused organizations and groups to build stronger relationships between wildlife viewers and the agency. Related tactics include a. Continue to encourage DWR staff to provide talks, guided walks, and programs for organizations and groups; b. Continue to encourage DWR staff to participate in wildlife viewing-focused organizations and groups and associated events and festivals; and c. Continue to encourage DWR staff to serve as advisors to Master Naturalist chapters and as instructors for training courses and continuing education programs.
Provide training or voluntary certification programs for wildlife viewing guides	Potential tactics that would provide training for agency staff, volunteers, and partners are found throughout the plan. Goal 1, Objective 4, Strategy 1 includes a potential tactic to provide training or guidelines for birding/viewing guides on how to support viewers with less experience at festivals. Another potential tactic under this strategy focuses on providing training for DWR volunteers on how to follow best practices in education and interpretation to engage the public in wildlife viewing opportunities. Relatedly, Goal 4, Objective 2, Strategy 5 is to train agency volunteers to become "ambassadors" that can serve as a conduit for communication between DWR and the wildlife viewing community.

Suggested approaches for increasing monetary contributions from wildlife viewing (n=19)	
Develop transparent communications about how the DWR is funded and uses its funds	Potential tactics were added under Goal 4, Objective 1, Strategy 1 and Goal 4, Objective 3, Strategy 2 related to increasing communication and transparency about how the DWR is funded and its expenditures. Additionally, more information about how the agency is funded has been added to the home page of the DWR website.
Emphasize wildlife viewing as a means to support the economy of the Commonwealth	A strategy was added under Goal 2, Objective 2 to revitalize partnerships with tourism agencies at state and local levels to achieve the VBWT's nature tourism potential and benefits. New, associated tactics include: a. Develop programs, educational content and/or materials for localities that compile available data on nature tourists, their growth nationally and in Virginia, their contribution to Virginia's economy, and DWR programs that can help them connect with this audience and support their locality's conservation efforts; b. Continue DWR's sponsorship, support, and participation in wildlife viewing festivals in Virginia; and c. Develop materials to help localities promote their local VBWT sites/loops.
Track and acknowledge the contributions that wildlife viewers make to the agency by purchasing hunting and fishing licenses	A tactic was added under Goal 4, Objective 2, Strategy 2 to communicate internally and externally about the role that wildlife viewers currently play in financially supporting the DWR. This includes sharing the results of the Wildlife Viewer survey conducted by Virginia Tech, which showed that some viewers purchase hunting and fishing licenses to support the agency and their recreation activities. Additional related tactics are nested under other strategies under Goal 4, which emphasize expanding internal and external communication about the ways in which viewers support the agency.
Develop mechanisms that allow wildlife viewers to contribute to the agency's conservation efforts	As described in the Financial Support section of Part III, the Restore the Wild membership offered by the DWR was designed to provide wildlife viewers with a clear opportunity to contribute to the DWR's habitat conservation work. Restore the Wild continues to evolve, and DWR continues to look for ways to use the framework of Restore the Wild to connect people to DWR and conservation through events and other opportunities, such as an inaugural "Run for the Wild" virtual event and citizen science projects. Other mechanisms for contributing to the agency, such as purchasing a conservation license plate, are also described in the Financial Support section.
Increase promotion of mechanisms through which wildlife viewers can contribute to the agency	Goal 4, Objective 3, Strategy 1 and Strategy 2 focus on increasing awareness – both internal and external to the agency – of the ways in which wildlife viewers can and do support the DWR financially.

<p>Encourage the allocation of additional permanent funding for the DWR from the State</p>	<p>Due to the potential for conflicts of interest, it is not appropriate to include a strategy that would encourage the DWR to petition the State legislature for additional funding. Additionally, a specific strategy along these lines is outside of the scope of this plan, which focuses on strengthening the support provided for wildlife viewing by the DWR and the support provided to the DWR by wildlife viewers. The plan does, however, acknowledge that full implementation of included goals, objectives, and strategies will likely require additional human and financial resources, and includes a potential tactic in Appendix B to communicate the importance of voting and advocacy as conservation behaviors to wildlife viewers.</p>
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Elements of a Resolution to be Considered By the Board of Wildlife Resources at a Special Called Meeting in June 2021 Pertaining to Deer Hunting with Dogs

- Support a change to Virginia's Right to Retrieve law that would preserve the Right to Retrieve but require deer hunters using dogs to make an attempt to notify the landowner prior to entering a posted property when the landowner has placed a phone number on the posted signs.
- Support a change to the law to require that dogs engaged in deer hunting wear collars with the owner's identification and contact information attached.
- Direct staff to examine the permit applicable to foxhound field trials and make recommendations to help preserve the intent of these events and prevent the intentional running of deer during them.
- Direct staff to develop a module to be included in the Department's Hunter Education program that addresses ethics and good practices in hunting with dogs.